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A Better Resurrection

I have no wit, no words, no tears;
My heart within me like a stone
Is numb too much for hopes or fears.
Look right, look left, I dwell alone;
I lift mine eyes, but dimmed with grief
No everlasting hills I see;
My life is in the falling leaf:
O Jesus, quicken me.

My life is like a faded leaf,
My harvest dwindled to a husk;
Truly my life is void and brief
And tedious in the barren dusk;
My life is like a frozen thing,
No bud nor greenness can I see;
Yet rise it shall—the sap of Spring;
O Jesus, rise in me.

My life is like a broken bowl,
A broken bowl that cannot hold
One drop of water for my soul
Or cordial in the searching cold;
Cast in the fire the perished thing;
Melt and remould it, till it be
A royal cup for Him, my King:
O Jesus, drink of me.

Christina Rossetti
(1830-1894)

Easter

Rise heart; thy Lord is risen. Sing His praise
Without delays,
Who takes thee by the hand, that thou likewise
With Him mayst rise:
That as His death calcined thee to dust,
His life may make thee gold, and much more, just.

Awake, my lute, and struggle for thy part
With all thy art.
The cross taught all wood to resound His Name,
Who bore the same.
His stretched sinews taught all strings what key
Is best to celebrate this most high day.

Consort both heart and lute, and twist a song
Pleasant and long:
Or, since all music is but three parts vied
And multiplied,
O let Thy blessed Spirit bear a part,
And make up our defects with His sweet art.

George Herbert (1593 - 1633)

Meditation

Real faith – living the resurrection

Cal Seerveld

Could the celebration of Easter actually make a difference in our life? Inside the walls of our home, school, business, and beyond? I shall present a section of Romans 6 that follows upon Paul's arguing that Christ's historical crucifixion, burial, resurrection and ascension has given us, while we were still sinners, access to God's grace. This grace can change us from being terrorized by sin and death into being justified before God with certain hope, and a new kind of unpressured life:

What are we saying? "Let's stay with sin to have grace show up the more?" Certainly not! How can we who have died to sin [in Christ] still live in sin? You know that, don't you, that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ have been baptized into Christ's death; that is, we were buried together in [Christ's] death through the baptism, so that just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too [raised up] might daily walk around in a newness of life.

Get this: if we have become grafted into Christ's death as it were, then we also shall certainly be grafted into his resurrection. You know that, right? The old way of being human was crucified together [with Christ] so that the whole corporeal weight of sin might be undone, so we would no longer be enslaved by sin. "Once dead, you are 'dead' to sin" [– remember?]

Well, if we have died with Christ. We believe that we shall also be alive with him, because we know that Christ raised-from-the-dead will never die again – death no longer lords it over him. In the death Christ went through, Christ died to sin once and for all; the life Christ lives he lives [forever] with God.

So you too should [in faith] consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Jesus Christ. Therefore, do not let sin be a tyrant in your mortal body so that you obey its sinful desires. Do not keep on offering your concrete corporeality [like ear, tongue, hand, foot, belly] to sin as instruments for doing what is wrong to another, but offer yourselves to God now as having become living creatures brought back from the dead! And offer your concrete corporeality [like belly, foot, head, ear and tongue] to God as weapons for doing what is right. You see, sin will not be lord over you anymore, for you are not struck under a law [that says "do this! Don't do that,"] but you are subject to grace. (Romans 6:1-14)

To hear God speak through Romans you have to catch the passion to Paul's argument and be caught by the logic of what chapters 1-8 says is so: without the historical sacrifice of Christ, we sinful humans would do ourselves in. But, because the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is historically so, whoever has faith in Christ as Lord can now live like somebody raised-from-the-dead. If you are baptized, says Romans 6, then you are marked "CLEAN! One of God's children." And the fine print on the label says, "Dead to sin – brought back alive." So go ahead, live like that, says Paul; realize what's been done to you by God.

Half domesticated

We all understand this, I think, but somehow it doesn't change the way we live. We still grumble, bad-mouth people, react to unkindnesses as if we have been mortally wounded, can't find the time of day or night to give a neighbor a spark of cheer – you know how it goes, we're so tied up in our own run around of concerns. It reminds me of the zoo on Long Island, New York, we kids would



Thomas' incredulity by Caravaggio

be taken to on very special occasions: FRANK BUCK – BRING 'EM BACK ALIVE ZOO, said the big sign.

And on holidays a lion tamer would get into this big out-door cage, and one by one six or eight lions would enter snarling at the crack of his whip to sit on stools, jump through hoops, growl appropriately and feint toward the man in knickers who called the shots. Frank Buck had brought them back alive to go through their paces, half-domesticated in their roars, still dangerous padding back and forth in their cages.

Can't tame sin

But the Paul of Romans has more than a zoo in mind. Sin has obsessive power over people. Persons who live out of a grudge and chew everything that comes their way into little bits of malice can't help themselves, says Paul. Persons who live out of an insecure drive always to be right and trample everything around them into submission are caught by something bigger than they can handle themselves, says Paul.

Persons who live out the burning conviction they must be perfect, who never give themselves quarter, who import guilt and export work-righteousness as if it were acid rain, are woebegone mortal creatures, says Paul. Anybody who is driven into a torpor by impure sexuality, money-greed, or the insatiable lust for alcohol, nicotine, sugar or spice and everything nice, is lethal, says Paul, and sick unto death – you can't save yourself! Sin is not something humans can cope with. Sin is stronger than we are.

Christ's death and resurrection broke the back of sin – right? Christ's action on earth ended the obsessive power of sin over human creatures who by faith belong to Christ. (Romans 3:31-31)

We understand that, I said, but then wonder why we still live like caged animals.

Maybe we need a re-formed image of faith.

You have been raised

You have "saving faith" not when you can affirm the verities of scripture, live a normal, moral Western life, and regularly beat yourself into a repentant pulp of humility: you have the faith scripture reports is the only

lifeline to God that exists when you know in your heart you have been raised-from-the-dead.

I personally know only about four real Christians – my Dad, an old neighbor, my mother-in-law, someone else, maybe a couple more. They have suffered hurt without rancor, are gently corrective toward wrong rather than judgmental, and do not try to set-things-straight so much as order affairs lovingly, intent upon

carrying along joyfully any who may be weak, trustfully biding God's timing.

They live like people raised-from-the-dead; they don't have to prove anything to themselves or to anybody. They are not compulsive people trying to make good, or to live up to requirements. They are subject to grace alone, and act clean, singularly pure amid all kinds of complexities that won't go away.

All the time in the world

If we don't recognize ourselves to be people actually raised-from-the-dead in Christ, then maybe we need to re-examine what we claim is our faith. If we can by looking into Romans and hearing God speak there realize that indeed, in spite of our hang-ups – can you believe it? – we are brought back from the dead, alive in Christ by his all powerful Holy Spirit, then that reality can start to wean me from my self-preoccupied stumbling blocks.

It can relativize the mountains facing me into mole-bills (cf. II Corinthians 4:13-18), and gradually free me into a creature who has all the time in the world, since I shall live forever with God and Christ's body of people on the new earth, where evil, deadlines, tears, and everything destructive of our lives, will finally be wiped out!

The power of Romans 6 is available for appropriation this day. Like a baptismal washing, God's chiding, arguing, comforting Word is able to change us and make us clean.

I close with a paragraph from I Corinthians 5:6-8. Says Paul:

Your boasting [about being holy, orthodox, reformers, or what not proper] is not a good thing. You know, don't you, that a little piece of yeast leavens the whole mixture of dough? Clean out the old yeast so that you may become a new batch of dough, since you really are to be unleavened bread. That's right, Christ our passover lamb, was sacrificially killed so that we might feast celebratively not with old yeast, the leaven of malice and underhanded evil, but with the unleavened breads of unadulterated purity and what will always hold true.

News

Evangelicals in U.S. square off on climate change

Harry der Nederlanden

Something of a feud has erupted among the leaders of the evangelical community in the U.S. James Dobson and a number of other prominent leaders particularly involved in promoting family values publicly chastised another leader for expressing concern about environmental issues, climate change to be specific. In an open letter they took to task Richard Cizik, vice president for governmental affairs for the National Association of Evangelicals, for distracting members from the central moral issues of the day, such as abortion and gay marriage. They called for his resignation. The NAE represents some 45,000 churches and about 30 million evangelicals in the U.S.

The American media have long been reporting on the evangelicals as an homogeneous right-wing political bloc preoccupied with issues of sexual morality and abortion. Though, recently some note has been taken of their global action on issues like Darfur and slavery. In 2004 the NAE already (belatedly) adopted a position on creation care. "Because clean air, pure water and adequate resources are crucial to public health and civic order," it stated "government has an obligation to protect its citizens from the effects of environmental degradation."

However, the NAE has never taken an official stance on climate change or global warming. A large group of evangelical leaders, not satisfied with that state of affairs, last year issued the widely publicized *Evangelical Climate Initiative*, which stated that "we are convinced that evangelicals must engage this issue without any further lingering over the basic reality of the problem or humanity's responsibility to address it.... Love of God, love of neighbor, and the demands of stewardship are more than enough reason for evangelical Christians to respond to the climate change problem with moral passion and concrete action."

The statement was signed by 86 national evangelical leaders, including 39 college presidents.

Not long after, another evangelical organization, *The Interfaith Stewardship Alliance*, criticized the action, saying that the government action recommended by the Evangelical Initiative would hurt the poor more than global warming would. Calvin Beisner, a professor at Knox Theological Seminary and a leader of the ISA, said the endorsers of ECI's statement "have embraced something without knowing enough of the background to know that the actual [effects] of what they propose are going to be precisely the opposite of what they intend." (Actually, the Evangelical Initiative spells out little or nothing in the way of concrete public policy.)

Downplaying the effects of global warming and the alarmism, the statement issued by the Alliance warned: "Government-mandated carbon dioxide emissions reductions not only would not significantly curtail global warming or reduce its harmful effects but also would cause greater harm than good to humanity – especially the poor – while offering virtually no benefit to the rest of the world's inhabitants." Over 110 evangelicals signed the Alliance statement.

"The consensus [on global warming] is usually mischaracterized," Beisner said. The consensus that exists is more on such things as the reality of global warming and the contribution of carbon dioxide to such climate change. "But [the] consensus is not that catastrophic, human-induced global warming is going on. I don't find it in the scientific literature."

Dobson and company went even further in their rejection



of consensus, insisting that the existence of global warming and of the human responsibility for it are still far from established, and they want to keep Cizik and the NAE from diverting energies to what they see as left-wing causes. Jerry Falwell, according to some reports, recently declared that global warming is a tool of Satan used to distract churches from their primary focus on preaching the gospel.

Much of the coverage in the secular press, of course, gleefully reports on the spat as the disintegration of the evangelical right and as a possible gain for Democrats. But the diversity has long been there. Because of their widespread fear of big government, however, evangelicals have long been reluctant to get behind government legislation to protect the environment.

The Evangelical Environmental Network conducted a poll in February of last year that found 70 percent of evangelicals in the U.S. saw global warming as a serious threat and over half of them thought the government should do something about it, even if it hurts their wallets.

Calvin DeWitt, President of the Academy of Evangelical Scientists and Ethicists and founder of the Au Sable Environmental Institute, which has trained many Christian students, is hopeful about the next generation of evangelicals. "We're in a transition," he said in an interview, "and its major root is in 60 or so evangelical colleges and universities where we have not only the religious teaching but we also have scientists ... providing a very solid scientific, biblical, theological root that's not easily disturbed any more. So the evangelical world in a very real way is maturing in terms of its knowledge and understanding of the world. And as an evangelical you do seek the truth, and when you understand the way the world works, you move on and say, 'Okay, now what must we do?' And what we must do now is care for creation. And I suppose it means we start at our very local place and build out from there."

Writing in response to the *Evangelical Climate Initiative* last year, Jim Skillen of Citizens for Public Justice, asked: "But what else do Evangelicals need to do, not merely as individual moral voices, consumers, and energy users, but as citizens responsible to help shape public policy?"

He points out that general statements "do not add up to a serious public policy response to climate change at this late date in the process of global warming."

He has a suggestion: "Why not find out who, in all of their respective organizations, has expertise on the environment and public policy and agree to bring them together in roundtable workshops to develop a public policy agenda, or agree to put up some funding to support policy research and a comprehensive advocacy plan, or agree to identify and support those organizations represented by the signers that are currently working in the public policy arena to address climate change and related issues."

"Beyond that, since Evangelicals are a worldwide network, why not set forth a 10- or 20-year plan for bringing Evangelicals together from around the world to address, in common, the public policy challenges facing all their governments and all relevant international organizations?"

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Editorial

Three Easter scenes

Harry der Nederlanden

Most of us have been hearing the gospel stories since childhood, and in our minds the biblical story is a unified, continuous whole. But we know there are gaps and jumps in the Bible. Quite a few things are dropped in, as it were, from nowhere. Surprises. Think of the books of Job and of Esther. Surprise packages – both of them. What of the Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes? Theologians have had great fun fitting them into the big story. They're like extravagant digressions, wonderful side-trips. But they all bring us to the same place. The Bible is a unity because the Lord our God is one God and he has always been there – in the most out-of-the-way places and in the most surprisingly intimate spots.

But although the Bible is a coherent unity, that unity isn't always on the surface; it isn't always easy to see. Sometimes we have to work hard to find it. It has something of the texture of the Christian life lived before the face of God. While we "know" he is there, we still sometimes look around in panic like a child lost in the woods and cry out, "Daddy, where are you?"

The gospel stories aren't plowhorses that trace a neat furrow either. They are a bit like goats. They can take sudden and surprising leaps, bounding forward in stops and starts. That's also and especially true around the end of Jesus' time on earth – around Easter. For the disciples, before whose very eyes the story is unfolding, are repeatedly brought up short to ask, "What's going on!?" It's not a Sunday sail down the river being part of God's story.

There they stand, the three women, at the entrance to the tomb. It's a one-way opening really – an exit from life. There are rituals to be followed now.

When death visits, we especially rely on rituals and customs. I experienced the comfort of that for myself when my father and mother died within a few weeks of each other. Stunned and exhausted with emotion, you really don't have the bodily and spiritual resources to think things through for yourself. The energy needed to take charge and be creative just isn't there. But traditions and communal forms kick in, and you are carried forward in your very personal grief by ancient, shared rituals. You follow the lead of others. In a sense, you go through the motions, but it feels right, it feels good to do so – to be

carried by something larger than yourself.

Although none of us has been to a crucifixion, we all have some faint inkling of what the women at the tomb are feeling – or not feeling. We're all human, after all, and we all have loved ones and hopes for our loved ones. The Bible does not dwell on the women's feelings and frame of mind. It doesn't have to. We bring to the scene what is needed. The gospel writers weren't interested in writing short stories or novels: there's no need to try to make these women "come alive" or to create "fully rounded characters" for us to identify with.

We know these women didn't come to the tomb that morning with sprightly, carefree steps, gossiping happily. The happenings of the last few days have left them shattered, numb, dazed. They are on automatic pilot, like factory workers overly familiar with their routines. They are doing what has to be done, as most women around the world still do.

Having come to the tomb, ready to carry out their tasks, they are brought up short. The tomb is empty. The body is gone. Another cruel blow. Who would have done such an awful thing?

After the wild, enthusiastic welcome to Jerusalem, there came the shock of the arrest, followed quickly by the trials – and then the whipping, the cross, the nails, the torment.

Blow upon blow. Their minds can hardly absorb it. They don't want to think about the horror of the past days. And now they can't even pay their proper respects to their master – to this strange, mild man they have grown to love. They had pinned such hopes, such dreams, such extravagant expectations on him. Dead and gone. They are torn, shredded, reduced.

There they stand, not knowing where to look, hardly daring to meet one another's eyes, gazing at their useless hands, feeling helpless, abandoned, betrayed....

And then a voice, "Whom is it that you seek?" (Quem quaeritis?)

No, you won't find it like that in the gospels, but this was for a long time part of the Easter liturgy of the church – a startling way to confront the church with Jesus' absence – his resurrection. He is not here. He is gone. But only because something unimaginably greater has happened. Today the world has been altered, shaken to its foundations. The horizons have dissolved, the heavens have wrapped themselves around the earth and we have been turned inside out.

So the story unfolds. One surprise, one shock after another.

Two disciples are walking along a road, their feet carrying them away from Jerusalem, the capital city still, echoing with the awful violence. As men sometimes do, they distance themselves from the scene of great grief. They slink away into the wings, away from the bloody stage where the awful drama played itself out – beyond their control.

But their minds are still whirling, roiling and muddy like a pool after a storm. On top of everything, those incredible, disturbing rumors. No body. Arisen? Crazy really. Fantastic! Overwrought women....

It's enough to make a man cry, "Enough! Stop!" And to clamp his hands over his ears.

It's a relief to get away from it all, to get some distance and to try to put it all into perspective, to make sense of all that has happened. It's a welcome relief, too, to try to put it into words to this stranger who has joined them along the way and to unburden themselves to him.

It's a long walk to Emmaus and their feet have been

dragging. The day, too, is dragging to an end. Here's an inn. Shall we stop for something to drink and a bite to eat? Life goes on: one must eat and drink. There is a lot more to tell and to ponder. Join us. We had such hopes... such dreams....

They look down at their feet. Do they really know where they're going? Or are they just walking to give themselves the illusion that they are doing something?

Ah, here comes the waiting woman carrying the bread and the wine....

Over a week later, there's a whole gang of Jesus' friends and disciples gathered in a large room. Even after a week, they are still afraid that those who arrested and executed Jesus have similar plans in mind for some of his followers. So the door is locked.

There is so much to talk about. Every time a new person joins them, the women repeat their stories and the two who never made it to Emmaus share what they have learned. Sometimes the conversation in the room ebbs into silence as each turns over these strange, difficult events in his or her own heart. And then the room explodes into noise, as everyone starts talking at the same time.

Those who were not here a week earlier are bursting with jealousy, and they keep asking those who were new questions. What did he look like? What did he say? What did he do? Are you sure you weren't hallucinating? What on earth does all this mean?

Enter Thomas. Yes, he's already heard the rumors. He loves Jesus as much as anyone, but these stories are simply too good to be true. There's magic. There's mass hysteria. He knows people: they're easily deluded. Not him. You say that the room was locked – and suddenly he was standing here in the middle of the room? In the flesh?

Thomas shakes his head. A couple of weeks ago, when the crowds met them as they entered Jerusalem, his mind was suffused with one story. That came crashing down with the crucifixion, to be replaced with another. Now he is being asked to wrap his mind around yet another story.

Spreading his hands palms upward on the table and looking down at his hands, he says, Not until I've touched the wounds from the nails in his hands....

And suddenly the room is still, very still. And Thomas's heart almost stops. He hardly dares to look up and he is all aquiver....

True, God, our Creator and Redeemer, our Lord and Father, is always there. He has been there from the beginning. His caring presence hovers over and indwells time from creation to consummation. He is there in the rising and the setting of the sun, in the diastole and systole of our hearts.

But he is also the God who withdraws, who leaves and who doesn't pay a visit or say a thing for generation after generation. Think of it: before Jesus' birth there's a huge gap in the story. The Bible is a story riddled with such gaps. We no longer have our daily person-to-person walks and talks in the garden like Adam did.

Jesus once walked among us. And then he left. But he left to be present in a much more wonderful, more global, more intimate way. We plod along the road, we go about our business, perform our rituals and routines, we gather together to talk – and suddenly our hearts burn within us....

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Editor: Harry der Nederlanden editor@christiancourier.ca
Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden rose@christiancourier.ca
Accounts/Advertising Manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer ads@christiancourier.ca

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News

Zimbabwe's economy and society spiralling downward

Harry der Nederlanden

Zimbabwe has been much in the news again of late, and it is more of the same bad news. The opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai was badly beaten on Sunday, March 11 when police stopped a prayer meeting in Highfields, a poor area of the capital, Harare. Other members were also jailed and there have since been more reports of opposition leaders being beaten. A number of students of the Student Christian Movement were also arrested.

Inflation has become so bad in the country that what cost one dollar at the beginning of the year will cost \$4,000 by the end of the year. That makes life extremely difficult. Because of the collapse of the economy, about 80 percent of the people are now unemployed. All this in a country that was once one of the most stable and prosperous in Africa. It was often called the bread basket of Africa because of its strong agricultural base.

That base was destroyed when Mugabe broke up all the large white-owned farms, promising to redistribute the land to landless poor Zimbabweans. It was a very badly managed revolution that has left much of this land unproductive. Drought, too, has taken a toll. Now the majority of people in the country are dependent on food aid and many are undernourished.

Many of the most able – an estimated 3 million – have emigrated or fled to other countries, mostly South Africa.



Meanwhile President Mugabe's main concern seems to be with maintaining power. Draconian laws and the high price of paper have nearly succeeded in shutting down opposition newspapers, and gatherings are also severely restricted, so galvanizing action against Mugabe's tyrannical rule is very difficult. Nevertheless, things are now becoming so bad for everyone in the country, commentators see the day drawing nigh when Mugabe's own party will turn against him.

The South African Council of Churches

joined critics in demanding that leaders in Africa and especially President Mbeki of South Africa must break their silence regarding Mugabi's ruinous rule. "The silence of the South African government is aggravating the situation," said Eddie Makue, the General Secretary of the SACC. "Our leaders must show that they are committed to helping the people of Zimbabwe find rapid solutions to the many problems confronting them."

Archbishop-Emeritus Desmond Tutu of South Africa says that he and his fellow Africans should "hang our heads in shame" at the brutal suppression of protest going on in Zimbabwe. "What more has to happen," he asked, "before we who are leaders, religious and political, of our mother Africa are moved to cry out, 'enough is enough'? Do we really care about human rights, do we care that people of flesh and blood, fellow Africans are being treated like rubbish, almost worse than they were ever treated by rabid racists?"

Sisonke Msimang, an African activist, complained, "The insistence that the Zimbabwe issue is an internal affair that must be resolved by Zimbabweans alone makes a mockery of the efforts of Zimbabweans who have marched and protested day after day for the past decade. If Zimbabweans had said this to South Africans during the apartheid era, we who stood for peace and

justice would have treated them with the contempt they deserved."

Zimbabwean refugees flooding into Botswana have overwhelmed resources there, but even without sufficient help the refugees are not willing to return. Refugees are being exploited and abused, but at least they are able to survive.

The Brussels-based think-tank, International Crisis group (ICG) has voiced concern that the economic meltdown in Zimbabwe could destabilise the region. A report noted that "the military is a potential source of instability. Despite pay raises in 2006, most salaries are dangerously close to or beneath the poverty line...and there are credible reports of desertions and mutiny."

Some see the bad news as a sign of hope because they see it as the beginning of the end for Mugabe. But if the area descends into chaos and civil war, Zimbabweans have not yet seen the worst of it. The ICG suggested that there could not be a better time than now for an intervention to resolve the crisis, when Mugabe's succession is being debated.

The think-tank urged South Africa, the regional powerhouse, the European Union and the U.S. to adopt a joint strategy, with "benchmarks leading to a genuinely democratic process, for which removal of sanctions and resumption of international aid to government institutions could be used at the appropriate time as incentives".

The myth of Muslim support for terror

Kenneth Ballen

WASHINGTON – Those who think that Muslim countries and pro-terrorist attitudes go hand-in-hand might be shocked by new polling research: Americans are more approving of terrorist attacks against civilians than any major Muslim country except for Nigeria.

The survey, conducted in December 2006 by the University of Maryland's prestigious Program on International Public Attitudes, shows that only 46 percent of Americans think that "bombing and other attacks intentionally aimed at civilians" are "never justified," while 24 percent believe these attacks are "often or sometimes justified."

Contrast those numbers with 2006 polling results from the world's most-populous Muslim countries – Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nigeria. Terror Free Tomorrow, the organization I lead, found that 74 percent of respondents in Indonesia agreed that terrorist attacks are "never justified"; in Pakistan, that figure was 86 percent; in Bangladesh, 81 percent.

Do these findings mean that Americans are closet terrorist sympathizers?

Hardly. Yet, far too often, Americans and other Westerners seem willing to draw that conclusion about Muslims. Public opinion surveys in the United States and Europe show that nearly half of Westerners associate Islam with violence and Muslims with terrorists. Given the many radicals who commit vio-

lence in the name of Islam around the world, that's an understandable polling result.

But these stereotypes, affirmed by simplistic media coverage and many radicals themselves, are not supported by the facts – and they are detrimental to the war on terror. When the West wrongly attributes radical views to all of the world's 1.5 billion Muslims, it perpetuates a myth that has the very real effect of marginalizing critical allies in the war on terror.

Indeed, the far-too-frequent stereotyping of Muslims serves only to reinforce the radical appeal of the small minority of Muslims who peddle hatred of the West and others as authentic religious practice.

Terror Free Tomorrow's 20-plus surveys of Muslim countries in the past two years reveal another surprise: Even among the minority who indicated support for terrorist attacks and Osama bin Laden, most overwhelmingly approved of specific American actions in their own countries. For example, 71 percent of bin Laden supporters in Indonesia and 79 percent in Pakistan said they thought more favorably of the United States as a result of American humanitarian assistance in their countries – not exactly the profile of hard-core terrorist sympathizers. For most people, their professed support of terrorism/bin Laden can be more accurately characterized as a kind of "protest vote" against current US foreign policies, not as a deeply held religious conviction or even an inherently anti-American or anti-Western view.

In truth, the common enemy is violence and terrorism, not Muslims any more than Christians or Jews. Whether recruits to violent causes join gangs in Los Angeles or terrorist cells in Lahore, the enemy is the violence they exalt.

Our surveys show that not only do Muslims reject terrorism as much if not more than Americans, but even those who are sympathetic to radical ideology can be won over by positive American actions that promote goodwill and offer real hope.

America's goal, in partnership with Mus-

lim public opinion, should be to defeat terrorists by isolating them from their own societies. The most effective policies to achieve that goal are the ones that build on our common humanity. And we can start by recognizing that Muslims throughout the world want peace as much as Americans do.

• Kenneth Ballen is founder and president of Terror Free Tomorrow, a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to finding effective policies that win popular support away from global terrorists.

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Ideas

St. Petersburg Declaration: long suppressed voices speak up

What we need now is an Age of Enlightenment in the Islamic world, of the Islamic mind-set or worldview. Without critical examination of Islam, it will remain unassailed in its dogmatic, fanatical, medieval fortress; ossified, totalitarian and intolerant. It will continue to stifle thought, human rights, individuality; originality and truth. (Ibn Warraq)

Many of us who immigrated to America thought we had escaped jihad, hateful propaganda, intimidation, and mind control, but we found that even in America, there are powerful Muslim forces who are trying to silence us. For the sin of criticizing terrorism – not Islam, just terrorism – we are threatened. (Nonie Darwish)

A few weeks ago, a small but determined group of critics of radical Islam gathered in St. Petersburg, Florida, to tell the world about their true feelings regarding Islamism – the kind that promotes violence and aspires to world dominance.

Rooted in reality

Robert Spencer, a veteran in the war against radical Islam, described their *Declaration* as “the most comprehensive and forthright statement of Islamic reform anyone has yet managed to come up with.” He writes that instead of denying that Islam is used to incite violence and oppression, “the St. Petersburg Declaration is firmly rooted in reality, and evinces no interest in fashionable evasions or political correctness.”

The *Declaration* issued on March 5, 2007 at the Secular Islam Summit is a brief, clearly worded statement of belief in the freedom of religion, tolerance, and the equal rights of women.

This document begins by introducing the sponsors “as secular Muslims, and secular persons of Muslim societies. We are believers, doubters, and unbelievers, brought together by a great struggle, not between the West and Islam, but between the free and the unfree.”

They affirm “the inviolable freedom of the individual conscience...the equality of all human persons...the separation of religion from state and the observance of universal human rights.” They insist that “the traditions of liberty, rationality, and tolerance...do not belong to the West or the East; they are the common moral heritage of humankind. We see no colonialism, racism, or so-called ‘Islamophobia’ in submitting Islamic practices to criticism or condemnation when they violate human reason or rights.”

The *Declaration* demands that Islam be released from the grasp of “of power-hungry men and the rigid structures of orthodoxy,” and the authors challenge academics and



Nonie Darwish

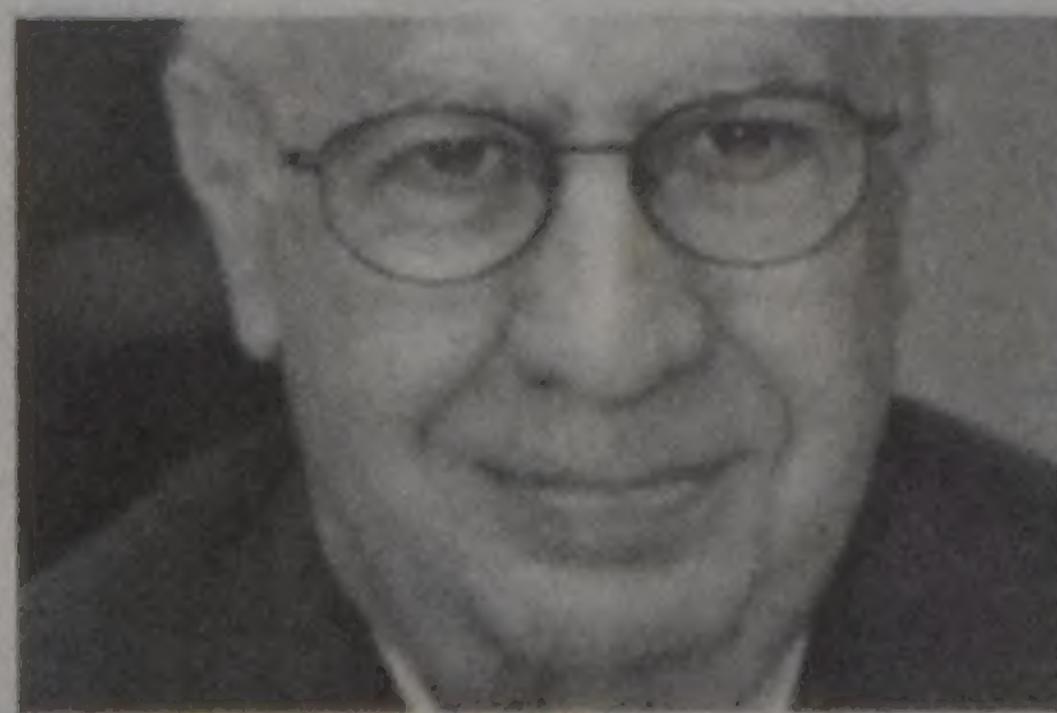
thinkers everywhere fearlessly to examine the origins and sources of Islam and to engage in free scientific inquiry through “cross-cultural translation, publishing, and the mass media.” They further remind all Muslims that there is a future for Islam as a personal faith, not a political doctrine; and they assure all members of non-Muslim faiths that they stand with them as free and equal citizens, while they are committed to defend the unqualified freedom of non-believers to question and dissent. Before all else, they believe that everyone must choose for themselves as “members of the community of conscience.” In this context, they call on all governments of the world to:

reject Sharia law, fatwa courts, clerical rule, and state-sanctioned religion in all their forms; oppose all penalties for blasphemy and apostasy, in accordance with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human rights; eliminate practices, such as female circumcision, honor killing, forced veiling, and forced marriage, that further the oppression of women; protect sexual and gender minorities from persecution and violence; reform sectarian education that teaches intolerance and bigotry towards non-Muslims; and foster an open public sphere in which all matters may be discussed without coercion or intimidation.

Diverse voices, one message

All of the signatories* of this document have a history of steadfastly standing against the apathy in the West regarding the threat of militant Islam. Some of them narrowly escaped Islamic bondage by fleeing to the West. All of them are very active in promoting the ideas and principles enumerated in the *Declaration* by publishing widely via articles, books, documentaries, and films.

Two have taken prominent roles in



Amir Taheri



Irshad Manji



Ayaan Hirsi Ali

Canada, including Irshad Manji (author of *The Trouble With Islam*), and Hassan Fatemolla, a Bangladeshi-Canadian playwright who helped lead the campaign against the introduction of Islamic Sharia law in Canada.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali, born in Somalia who became a refugee in Holland, has become known for her involvement in Dutch politics and her adamant opposition to the oppression of women in Muslim countries. Her most recent book *Infidel* gives a fascinating glimpse of life within Muslim countries – as well as within Muslim immigrant communities in the

Islamic “Tolerance” in action

Harry Antonides

Early this year the Campbell Baptist Church in Windsor, Ontario, led by senior pastor Donald McKay, scheduled a series of meetings devoted to an in-depth look at Islam. Zachariah Anani, an ex-terrorist converted to Christianity, was invited to present the first three lectures, beginning on January 11. Some 35 Muslims attended this meeting and protested that Anani was inciting hatred by misinterpreting the Koran and taking it out of context.

Wally Chafchak, a member of the Windsor Police Services Board, who is also a member of the Windsor Islamic Association, denounced Anani’s speech as a hate crime that should be investigated by the authorities. MP Joe Comartin accused McKay of fostering hatred and spouting bigotry. McKay and Anani said they received death threats.

The Canadian arm of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-CAN), ever quick to trumpet any perceived offence to Muslims, sent letters to the Ontario Attorney General and the Windsor police demanding that Anani be investigated for a Criminal Code violation. CAIR-CAN stated in its January 13 newsletter: “If hateful speech is indeed being propagated in Windsor, it must be dealt with promptly under the law. Freedom of speech is a cherished Canadian value, however it is not an absolute.”

The upshot of the furor against this church’s attempt to subject Islam to an honest critique was that the church leaders were cowed into canceling Anani’s lecture series. But to his credit, McKay stuck to his position that he is entitled to express his disagreement with Islamists who openly advocate Islamic world dominance.

The enemies of freedom of speech and religion can chalk up another victory in our country. Where were the other Christian churches with their support of this beleaguered church in Windsor? And where was the outcry by the defenders of freedom in the press? Mostly there was silence. Even worse was the so-called expert who did not hesitate to smear Anani and McKay as “trouble makers” and “lying idiots.” (Terry O’Neil, “The Battle of Windsor,” *Western Standard*, Feb. 26, 2007)

West. She has received many death threats, and even now lives with the protection of bodyguards.

Wafa Sultan has become famous after her televised debate with imam Dr. Ibrahim Al-Khouli on Al Jazeera in February 2006. Nonie Darwish, the lone Christian among the signatories, was born in Egypt and at first fully convinced of the truth of Islam. She grew up being taught to hate all non-Muslims, and especially the Jewish nation. She is the author of *Now They Call me Infidel: Why I Renounced Jihad for America, Israel, and the War on Terror*.

Afshin Ellian, a refugee from Iran now

Stewardship

teaches law at the University of Leiden, the Netherlands. Amir Taheri, also Iranian born, is a prolific author and commentator on the issues mentioned in the *Declaration*. Ibn Warraq specializes in the study of the Koran and is best known for his scholarly *Why I am not a Muslim*. His just-published book is *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said's Orientalism*.

All of the fourteen signatories of the *Declaration* represent a wide range of beliefs, from deeply religious to atheist. But they are united in their determination to alert an often skeptical and apathetic public to the dangers of militant Islam.

CAIR attacks the messengers

Their task (and ours) is all the more difficult because radical Islam has found a home in many Muslim communities in the West, which are used as springboards for the spread of Wahhabism. Their spokesmen are adept at playing the victims of Islamaphobia while trying to delegitimize the message of the *St. Petersburg Declaration*.

But such critics have one major difficulty: they are unable to maintain their good-faith image if they openly denounce the freedom, tolerance, equality and the separation of mosque and state, as advocated in this *Declaration*. Who in his right mind would not laud such fruits of an open and civil society?

Enter the Council on American Islamic-Relations, which bills itself as "America's largest civil liberties group" whose mission is "to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding."

CAIR's reaction to the *Declaration* was not to oppose its content head-on, but to attack the character of its sponsors. CAIR spokesman, Ahmed Bedier tried to raise suspicion by noting that the Summit was funded by neoconservatives, and that ex-Muslims, including Nonie Darwish, Wafa Sultan, and Ibn Warraq, are in no position to criticize Islam.

Attacking the persons instead of their message is an age-old technique that invariably fools some people. But it is unworthy of anyone who really wants to engage in dialogue and to enhance understanding. In fact, such a ham-fisted attempt to avoid the truth only serves to confirm the core message of the *Declaration*.

Despite the wide-ranging worldviews of its sponsors, the *St. Petersburg Declaration* is right about the one thing that all freedom-respecting people are able to endorse. It is a courageous step against a new form of dictatorship that many refuse to see for what it really is.

That such a public stance in Islam-ruled countries would be subject to the death penalty tells us all we need to know about Islamism. And that some of the signatories, living in the free West, have a death sentence pronounced against them is further proof of the timeliness of this document.

*Fourteen names are attached to the *Declaration*. Phyllis Chesler, one of the participants at St. Petersburg Summit, reported that additional names could not be released "for security reasons."

Harry Antonides
hantonides@sympatico.ca

Fundraising 3 - Paul

This is the third and final installment in series of three articles on fundraising. Though you may not be a fundraiser, a fundraiser may have had an impact on you at one time or another so please read on.

In the first of the series, I focused on Moses and how he was instructed by God to only accept gifts for the Tabernacle from those *whose heart prompts him to give*. In the second of the series, I focused on the leadership of David and how he modeled generous giving and challenged all the leaders of his kingdom to also give for the building of the temple. Leadership in giving, especially when people are skeptical that their giving will do anything, encourages the prompting to give.

For the third in this series, I thought we would look at another important aspect of fundraising, that is – the decision of a donor to give. We'll consider Paul's approach in his teaching to the Corinthian church back around A.D. 55.

Not long after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the expansion of the early church, there was much persecution of the new believers. Many in Jerusalem were rendered jobless and rejected by community and family. There was much need in Jerusalem and the mission churches heard about this need and responded with "rich generosity" (2 Cor. 8:2). The church in Corinth was the first to respond and quick to promise even more!

The churches in Macedonia were poorer than in Corinth but when Paul told them about the generosity of the Corinthians, they also responded. The pressing need and the example of the Corinthians encouraged the believers in Macedonia. But now Paul is getting anxious, wondering if the Corinthians will actually follow through as promised.

It is in this context the Paul writes about generous giving in chapters 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians. Of particular focus is the need to act – to decide – to follow through on a promise or desire to do something. As the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians:

Each man [person] should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7

The Apostle Paul is saying: "Follow through! Do what you've already been prompted in your heart to do. Don't hesitate or give reluctantly, but because you wanted to and are blessed by God to do so." Intentions are not enough. Making a decision is the next step, but if there is no follow-through it would be like the son in the parable who said he would do what his father asked him but then didn't do it (Matt. 21:28-29). In the parable, Jesus lauds the son who said he wouldn't do what his father asks but then repents of his decision and does what his father asked. It is the action that is important.

In fundraising it is important to get a commitment. In many campaigns, donors are asked to fill in pledge cards. These are important tools to help us with our follow-through (the

Reflections on Stewardship

Rick De Graaf

discipline to carry it out) on the decisions we make. In Christian fundraising they should not be portrayed as contracts for we know that only God determines what we will be able to do in the future (Prov. 19:21). Even without a fundraiser's prompting, it is a good practice to plan your giving and write-it-down – a practice that should be done at least once a year. It's about decision and follow through.

The Apostle Paul fretted about the Corinthians following through on their promise to help. He also knew that their integrity to act on their decision was at stake. We need to periodically ask ourselves – how am I doing on my follow-through? Good giving decisions with faithful follow-through leads to the *cheerfulness* the Apostle Paul also wrote about (2 Cor. 9:7).

My friend Clarence, who is a Christian fundraiser, passed along this appropriate quote from Eric Butterworth:

A committed giver is an incurably happy person, a secure person, a satisfied person and a prosperous person.

Stewardly Tip: Giving plans. Research has shown that people who *annually* plan their giving are more generous and consistent givers. It is a discipline to sit down at least once in a year – with your spouse if you have one – to plan and pray about your giving: church, favorite Christian ministries, Christian education and other favorite charities. Having a plan helps you focus your giving. Edith and I usually set aside a portion of our 'giving plan' for non-Christian charities, but give to them only once a year. Even so, I may get many appeals – which I simply place in an folder that I don't open until early December, when we decide who gets some of this portion. Having a plan helps us to manage our giving and focus on those causes we feel prompted to support.

Readers: Share your Stewardly Tips so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: Gifts of Appreciated Securities

Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario
Rick's email: rickd@csservices.ca

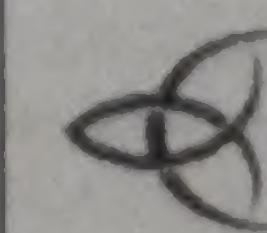


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Church

How Korea embraced Christianity

Jane Lampman

While Christianity's explosive growth has swept through much of the Southern Hemisphere – particularly across Africa – another dramatic story has unfolded in Asia. Some have dubbed it the "Korean miracle."

About one-third of South Koreans are now Christian. Seoul, the capital, boasts 10 of the 11 largest Christian congregations in the world. And South Korea sends more missionaries abroad to spread the word than any other country except the United States.

Christianity has grown from a few hundred adherents in the late 19th century to "about 9 million Protestants and 3 to 4 million Catholics in South Korea today," says the Rev. Samuel Moffett, professor emeritus at Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey.

Dr. Moffett and his wife, Eileen, experienced "the miracle" firsthand. As a son of the first long-term Protestant missionary in northern Korea, he was born in Pyongyang in 1916 and grew up there. Later, the couple spent 25 years serving as missionaries in South Korea, starting in 1955 after the Korean War ended.

No one knows how many Christians remain in North Korea. Two-thirds of Korean Christians lived there before the war, but many fled to escape Communist rule.

The Moffetts have watched South Korea turn into an economic wunderkind, move from authoritarianism to democracy, and become a bastion of Christianity.

"Koreans are natural evangelists – they love to tell the good news," Moffett says during a recent phone interview from his home in Princeton, N.J.

For example, Mrs. Moffett remembers a drive they once took into the Korean countryside in their jeep, stopping along the road to buy a watermelon. "After the transaction, the man looked up and said in Korean, 'Are you a Christian?' I said 'yes,'" she recalls. "Then he said, 'Oh, that's wonderful. If you weren't, I was going to tell you how much you were missing!'"

Today, thousands of Koreans rise to attend prayer services in huge city churches at 4:30 a.m. before heading for work.

"Their prayer life is remarkable, and the whole congregation prays together," Sam says. "In the country churches, you sometimes have to ring a bell to get them to stop."

Yet when the Moffetts arrived after the war, "Korea was very much torn up, with only one paved road in what is now South Korea," Eileen remembers. The per-capita income was only \$80 a year. "Many people had no adequate housing, and some were starving at certain times of the year before the next crop came in."

The newlyweds headed to the rural southeastern area known as Andong, where they learned the language, helped provide food and clothing for the needy, and traveled around to serve the country churches.

Despite desperate conditions, Eileen says, "the people were wonderful – so committed, of good humor, and devoted."

The dynamism of Korean Christianity, many observers agree, is an outgrowth of the peninsula's unique history as well as the early role of indigenous leadership. Christian teachings were first brought to Korea not by foreigners, but by Korean diplomats who came in contact with Roman Catholicism in Japan and Manchuria. An active lay movement developed, but it led to controversy and periods of great persecution.

The first Protestant missionaries, American Presbyterians and Methodists, arrived in the late 1800s. The introduction of the Bible in the local language and the founding of schools for boys and girls helped spread the faith beyond the elites. Moffett's father, also named Samuel, was an early Presbyterian missionary.

"He landed in Pyongyang in 1890 on his 26th birthday and stayed for 46 years," Sam says. He founded the first seminary and began training Koreans.

"Samuel Moffett Sr. was a missionary of great vision and commitment – a major figure who educated native pastors," says Timothy Kiho Park, a Korean who directs Korean studies at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, Calif.

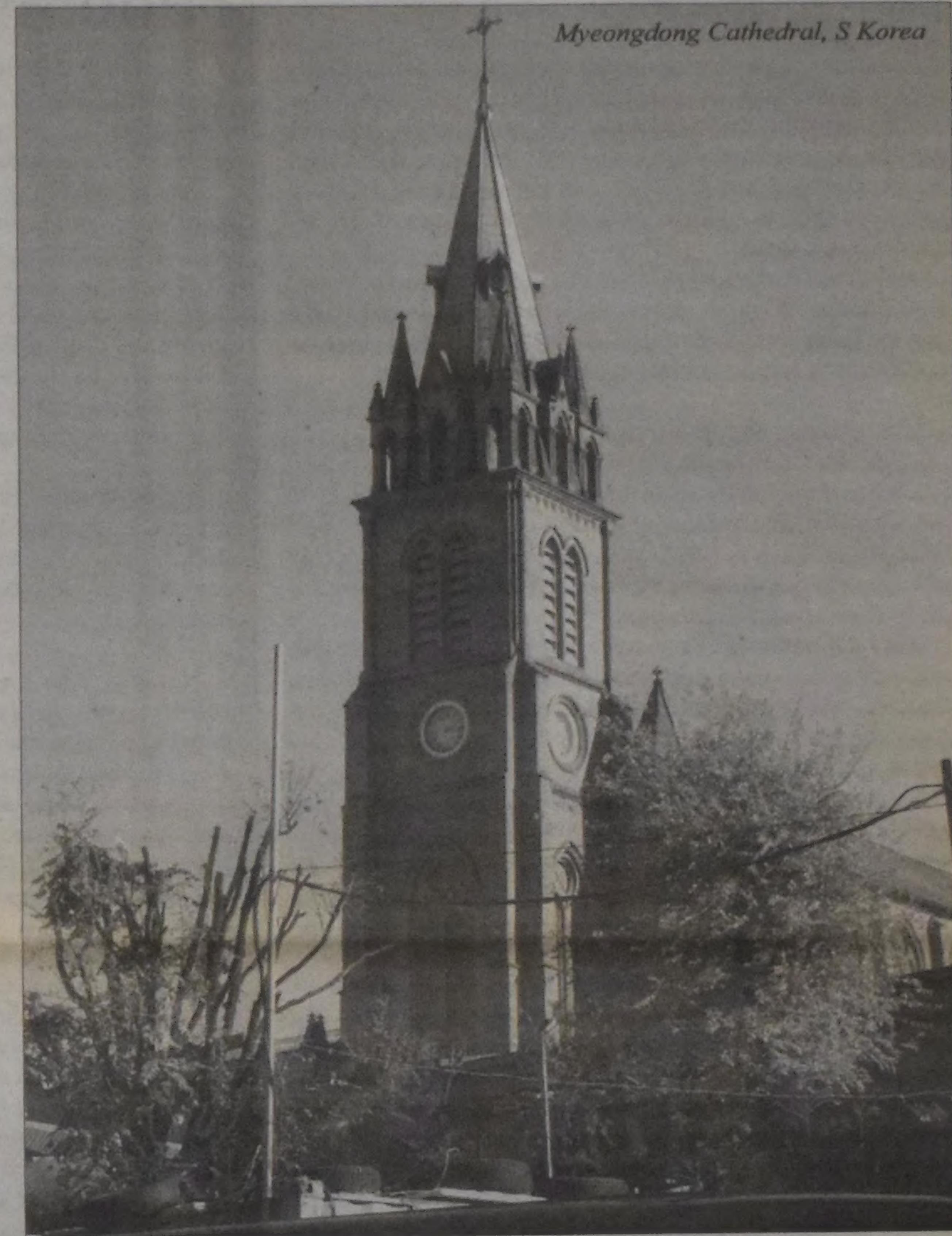
One key to the rapid growth was the strategy adopted by the young pioneer missionaries, which emphasized developing indigenous leadership: "self-government, self-propagation of the faith, and self-support."

"This encouraged national leaders to take care of their own affairs without foreign control or funding," Dr. Park says. "They practiced it from the beginning, advising but letting the Koreans preach and run the churches."

And the Korean people, in desperate straits, were hungry for what the preachers had to offer. Japan colonized the peninsula from 1905 to 1945, and attempted to "Japanize" the population. In the midst of great suffering, Christianity apparently met people's spiritual needs. While some Koreans were Confucianists or Buddhists, "mostly [they were] shamanists and animists," Eileen says. "People often lived in fear of evil spirits."

The faith also grew rapidly as it became closely identified with the Korean independence movement. Some native Christians were imprisoned by the Japanese for pro-independence activities, including refusing to worship Japan's emperor. Missionaries were seen as supporting the movement. Sam's father was forced to leave the country in 1936 when he refused to send his students to the Shinto shrines.

Sam himself had not intended to become a missionary, he says, yet he got "hooked by the Lord." During a talk he attended while studying in the US, he recalls, the speaker said, "Gentlemen, your watches could tick for 9-1/2 years without numbering the people in



Myeongdong Cathedral, S Korea

China who have never heard the gospel."

That did it. With a Yale doctorate in hand, he headed off as a missionary to China in 1947, and soon faced the Communist revolution. "I stayed too long, was interrogated, detained, and finally given a people's trial," he says. He was thrown out of the country in 1951.

For most of the couple's quarter century in Korea, Sam taught ministry candidates at the Presbyterian College and Seminary in Seoul, where the seminary founded by his father in Pyongyang was reestablished. It has since become one of the largest in the world.

"Presbyterians are to Korea what Baptists are to Texas," he says with a chuckle.

Eileen, who has a master's degree in Christian education, for seven years served as director of the Korea Bible Club Movement, a network of schools for some 50,000 underprivileged children. Even children who worked in factories during the day would come to school at night, she says.

Christian chaplains active in factories and in the Army have been another key element in the Korean "miracle," as are the regular revivals held by churches.

Today, more than 16,000 Korean missionaries are working in countries around the

globe. "Korea had a mission movement from the very beginning, with students from among the earliest seminary graduates going to Japan, Mexico, California, and Siberia," Park says.

The Moffetts stay in touch by phone with close Korean friends and still travel there quite often. Eight years ago, they went to North Korea, the home of Sam's childhood. They took food and medical supplies, working with a North Carolina-based group, Christian Friends of Korea. Just last May, they took an unusual and unexpected trip back to the peninsula. The church in Korea asked to rebury Sam's father on the campus of the seminary he founded. "We were a little shocked," he says, "but we realized that was exactly what he would have loved." The couple took his parents' ashes to Korea with them.

Today, although a nonagenarian, Sam is busy working with a colleague on the third volume of his "History of Christianity in Asia." Eileen is archiving the letters of Korean missionaries from the 19th and 20th centuries.

Jane Lampman is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor

Church

Pastor and sons go missing in growing Sri Lanka abductions

Anto Akkara

Bangalore, India (ENI) – The National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka is pleading for international support after four members of the church grouping, including a pastor and his two sons, went missing in early March.

"We are appealing to international agencies to put pressure on the government to reveal the whereabouts of these missing church members," Godfrey Yogarajah, general secretary of the Evangelical alliance told Ecumenical News

International from Colombo.

In a statement, the alliance said that 51-year-old pastor Victor Emmanuel Yogarajan, along with his two sons Daniel and David, and another young Christian, Joseph Sugandakumar, had been missing from a Colombo suburb since early on March 2.

The pastor, who heads the Gospel Missionary Church in Vavuniya in the north of the island, was in the Sri Lankan capital with the young people, to make travel arrangements for them to go abroad. The four

went missing after they ventured out of their Negombo residence.

"We have checked with various police and other departments but they are denying they have arrested these missing people," said Yogarajah. "The fact that even pastors are being targeted shows the worsening situation."

Evangelical pastor Vincent Vinodharaja, who leads the Christian Church of the Apostle in Jaffna, went missing on August 11, 2006, followed, 10 days later, by a Roman Catholic priest,

Thiruchelvam Nihal Jim Brown of Jaffna and his lay helper.

In January, Nallathamby Gnanaseelan, of the Tamil Mission Church in Jaffna was shot dead on a road, by Sri Lankan security personnel, in the country's troubled Tamil heartland.

The Hong Kong-based Asian Human Rights Commission has said that a disappearance occurs in Sri Lanka every five hours. The Civil Monitoring Committee on Extra Judicial Killings and Disappearances has registered

nearly 100 complaints of disappearances in the Sri Lankan capital in recent months, while hundreds of disappearances have been reported across the island.

Victor Perera, Inspector General of the Sri Lankan police, admitted on March 6 that a large number of abductions have been carried out illegally by police officers and troops. The admission came after five bullet-ridden bodies of unidentified men were found in the north central district of Anuradhapura on the same day.

Human rights must consider morality, says Orthodox leader

Sophia Kishkovsky

Moscow (ENI) – A senior official of the Russian Orthodox Church has told a meeting in Moscow that human rights cannot be considered only from a secular standpoint, which he said often fails to take into account questions of morality, and the difference between good and evil.

"To speak of freedom and not speak of good and evil is impossible," said Metropolitan Kirill of Smolensk and Kaliningrad, the chairperson of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department of External Church Relations, when he opened the two-day gathering at the Danilov monastery on March 20. "This is what is absent from the absolute majority of contemporary

documents that describe the rights and freedoms of people."

Kirill referred to the issue of homosexuality in Sweden, where, he said, "If you officially say from the pulpit that homosexuality is a sin, you can be sent to trial." He was apparently referring to the case of a Swedish Pentecostal pastor initially sentenced to one month in prison for describing homosexuals as a "cancerous tumor", and whose conviction was overturned on appeal.

Kirill added, "Without a system of moral coordinates we can only state that, yes, people have freedom. But we can't avoid the question of how a person uses this freedom."

The meeting was hosted by the

Russian Orthodox Church for a delegation from the Church and Society Commission of the Conference of European Churches (CEC). The agenda included discussions related to the conception and implementation of human rights issues within a religious context.

Kirill and other speakers made reference to the human rights catastrophes that defined Europe in the 20th century, including Nazism and Stalinism.

Those addressing the meeting also included Kirill Frolov, the press secretary of an organization called the Union of Orthodox Citizens, and the Russian church's representative on the CEC Church and Society Commission's work-

ing group on human rights and religious freedom.

Frolov said other concerns for Orthodox believers in Russia today include the push to hold a gay pride parade in Moscow, the difficulty of implementing Orthodox studies classes in many schools, and pressure and acts of violence against Russian Orthodox believers and parishes in Ukraine.

The Rev. Antje Heider-Rottwilm, from the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) and co-moderator of the Church and Society Commission, led the CEC delegation to Moscow. Noting that the meeting was being held at the initiative of the Moscow Patriarchate, Heider-Rottwilm said this was a move she welcomed.

"I'm very happy that they [Russian Orthodox] no longer oppose only western morality, but speak about their own approach to human rights," she told Ecumenical News International. "We feel we [in the West] are sometimes misunderstood," Heider-Rottwilm said. "They [Russian Orthodox] read something about the western churches and think that our understanding is only a consequence of secularism." She praised the opportunity for a theological discussion, and added, "This meeting is one step in this continuous dialogue."

CEC groups 126 churches, principally Orthodox, Protestant and Anglican, from throughout Europe, and has offices in Geneva, Brussels and Strasbourg.

Nigeria: Sokoto state stifles growth of church buildings

SOKOTO, Nigeria (Compass Direct News) – The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), one of the largest Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, is also one of the fastest growing churches in Africa. It is a cradle of miraculous healing, signs and wonders, but there is one miracle the church in this northern city has been unable to muster: keeping a Shiite sect from taking over its property.

An Islamic sect called Izala has built a mosque near the denomination's Kokeri parish and taken the church to court to force it relocate and take over its property, Pastor Abisona Michael told Compass.

"We have been forcefully dragged to court out of our will, because we do not believe that a church should go to court," Michael said. "We are waiting for the court to give its judgment on the matter, since all efforts we made for an amicable settlement with these Muslims have failed."

The Islamic sect has not even presented a legal pretext for taking over the property in Sokoto, capital of one of Nigeria's predominantly Muslim northern states, Michael said. Muslims dominate the legal, government, and public service systems in the north, which Islamists use to harass and frustrate Christians, he said.

The Izala launched the legal offensive simply because they believe that the court, being filled with Muslim judges, will seize the property from the church and give it to them, Michael said. "Such cases are very common in northern Nigeria, and the church is helpless about it," he said.

Such disputes are not restricted to Kokeri parish – the denomination is also facing legal and bureaucratic tangles at parishes in the Binji and Silame areas of Sokoto.

"At Binji, we are facing serious opposition," Michael said. "We

planted a church there, and when we needed to build a sanctuary, the local government administration there banned the community from selling land to us to build the church."

Even in situations where Christians are able to acquire lands and donate them to the denomination for building sanctuaries, Michael says, "approval of the building plan of the sanctuary is never granted."

Michael said the legal action against his church "has brought a lot of contention, a lot of strife, physically and of course spiritually too, to us."

"There is religious discrimination here which has resulted from stiff opposition to Christianity," he said. "For instance, the government here does not allow sale of landed property to Christian churches, and even if a church acquires land, it is always difficult for it to develop it because the laws regulating property development are very

stringent for churches."

The Rev. Reuben Yaro, chairman of the Sokoto district of the Evangelical Church of West Africa, agreed that it is problem common to many churches in the state. Getting land and permission to build has been painful for the ECWA's churches, he said.

"We've had problems getting lands in Kadiji, Farfaru, Akila, Gwadabawa, Mabera, and Old Airport areas to build sanctuaries for our local congregations," he said. "At Kadiji, our church members built a sanctuary on a property donated by a member, but in 2005 the Muslims there went and destroyed the building and pews, thereby, forcing us to vacate the land."

The government has prohibited the Kadiji congregation to rebuild the church, he said.

If Christians try to ignore legal and bureaucratic roadblocks,

Muslim opponents resort to force. After the PFN began building a ministry center called the Goshen Project last November, Atiniku said, "Muslims went to the place and destroyed the buildings there, and the blocks we had there were vandalized and stolen by them."

His ministry had applied for approval to build the center 10 years prior, without success.

Islamic officials do not seem to discriminate among denominations. The experience of Kevin Aje, Roman Catholic bishop of Sokoto diocese, sums up a plight common to leaders across the ecclesiastical spectrum.

"I have, through difficulty, been able to acquire two landed properties for our church," said Bishop Aje, also chairman of the Sokoto state chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria. "But up to this moment that I am talking to you, it has not been possible for us to get approval to build the churches."

Personal experience

Mr. Angel

Lou DeVries

"Temperature slightly below normal, at higher elevations the possibility of light snow or flurries. Windy at times."

Not exactly the forecast we wanted to hear but not unexpected in late fall.

Our daughter had invited us to come and visit for a weekend.

The distance was not a problem, around three hundred kilometers.

The problem was that in those three hundred kilometers there are two mountain-passes to cross.

Mountain-passes and snow, even light snow, are not a combination to our liking.

We finally decided to give it a try. The first one hundred kilometers are in a valley leading up to the mountain range. Before going into the mountains we again listened to the weather report.

It had not changed so we kept going.

We decided that when we see the first snowflake, we'd turn around."

It took about an hour to get to the first summit, and a few hundred meters beyond that is a picnic site. We had brought some sandwiches and a thermos with coffee; if the weather cooperated we planned to sit there and have lunch.

It did not snow, but it was cold and windy, so we had "lunch" in the car.

We walked around for a few minutes and left.

Another five hundred meters down the highway there is a sign pointing to a memorial site.

We had seen that sign several times when we passed by in the summer, but had never been curious enough to find out what it was all about.

I don't know what got into me, but on this day, a cold day, and with the possibility of snow. I turned into that crushed-rock driveway leading to the memorial. A little ways down I came to my senses and told myself to turn around because this was not a bright idea. (Not to say that it was stupid). We were so close to the memorial, however, that we could see a picnic table with a woman and two girls sitting at it and it looked as if they were praying. When the older of the girls heard a car coming she jumped up, ran to the car and asked me:

"Are you an angel?" Before I could confirm or deny this, her mother was standing behind her and explained why Judy asked this. They had been to the valley to see the girls' grandmother and she had promised them that on the way home they would have a little bit of a picnic in the park. It was so cold and windy in the park that she decided to go to this memorial site.

She knew it was much more sheltered and there was a picnic table.

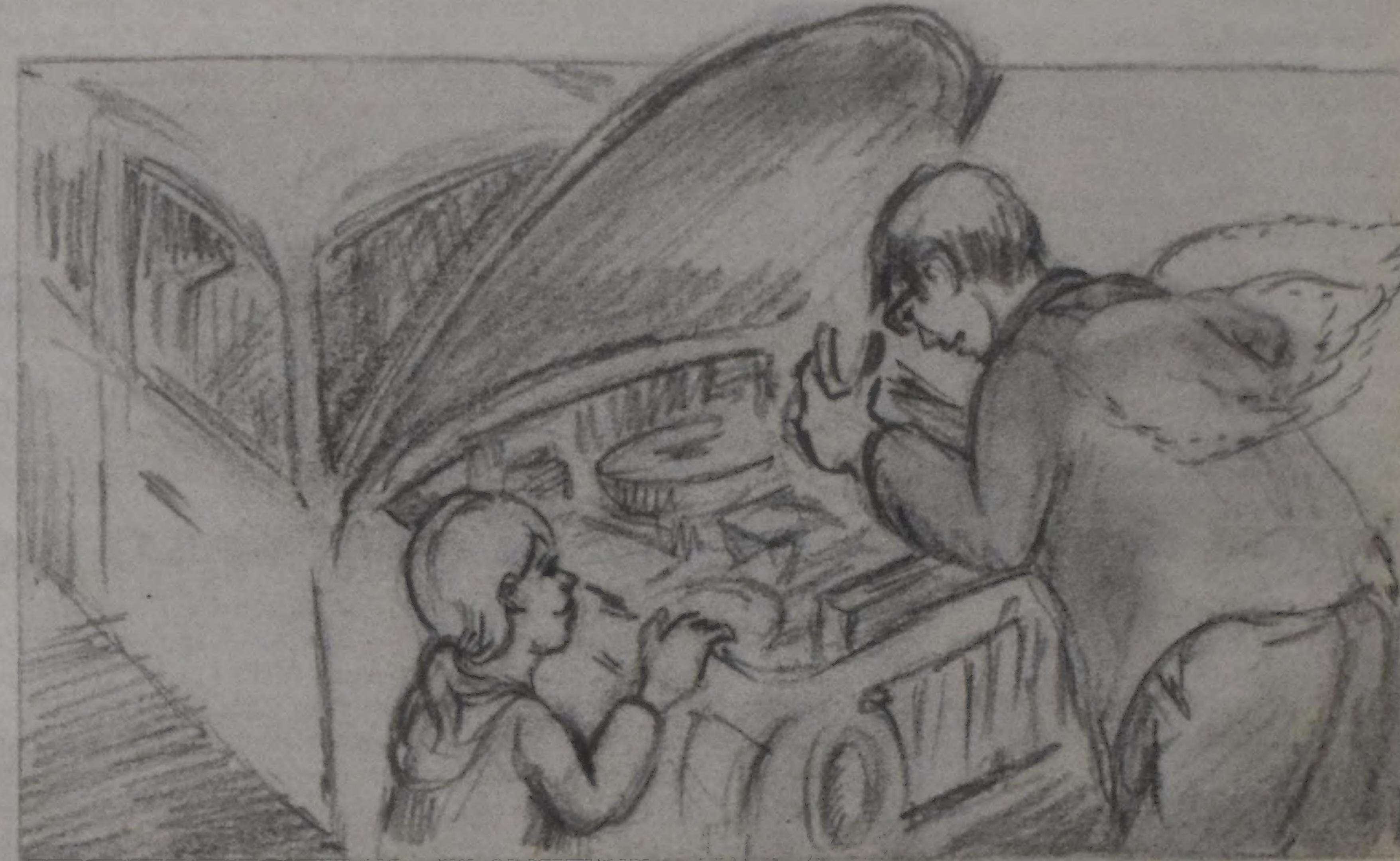
When they were ready to go the car would not start because the battery was dead.

They were praying for an angel to come with a set of booster cables to get the car going again. She looked a little puzzled when I said that she needed two angels, one angel with the booster cables and another with a battery. Since I had both items I offered to help her. She gladly accepted.

While I walked to the trunk Judy was studying the back of me. I heard her say to her mother: "He does not have any wings, maybe they are in the trunk when he is driving."

With that she ran to the trunk where I was looking for the cables.

With the sweetest of voices she said to me: "Your



trunk looks the same as the one on Daddy's car, after a flower pot fell over and spilled a part of its dirt." I pretended that I did not hear it.

I walked back with the cables and asked the woman where the battery was.

"Under the hood," she said. This taught me to phrase my questions more precisely. I meant to find out if it was on the driver- or passenger's side.

It was on the driver's side I discovered. I went back to my car and realized that my knowledge of the location of my battery was equal to hers.

I quickly looked; it was on the passenger's side.

When she heard the engine purring again she thanked me profusely and offered me money; regretfully I had to tell her that only heavenly currency is acceptable in heaven.

Since I was sure that she did not have any I assured her that I was authorized to say that this time the assistance was on the house.

Judy had been studying my car and wanted to know if I, on my way back to heaven, was going to drive through a rain cloud so my car would get washed.

Before they left they came to shake hands.

Judy put her little hand in mine and said: "Thank you Mr. Angel to get mommy's car started." Then she took a good look at me and continued, "You look just like my daddy sometimes looks like, then he says to mommy, 'Before I go I better have a shave.'"

They got in the car and left.

A few minutes later we were ready to leave too.

I turned from that gravel road onto the highway when the thought struck me that I still did not know what that memorial was all about.

And although I knew that there was nobody on the backseat, I am sure that I heard a chuckle coming from there.

Now it is springtime again. So what brought this memory back? It was a letter in the mailbox this morning. Besides the usual advertising that A's pizza is better than B's and cheaper too, this letter, with a handwritten address on it, had my first name misspelled,

just by one letter mind you.

The only official document where my name is spelled like that is my driver's license.

Since the letter did not have the sender's name on it I wondered who would know this discrepancy.

I had not shown my driver's license to anyone I know of, not even a policeman. All of a sudden it dawned on me that when Judy's mother walked towards my car last fall, she did not first look at me but at the license plate on the car. (A wise woman, after all, you never know.)

She probably jotted it down somewhere.

I opened the letter and indeed it was she.

She wrote:

Dear Mr. Angel,

A few weeks after you were so kind to help us out when we were in distress, Judy did not feel well and was diagnosed with leukemia.

Although the treatment of the disease in many children causes a remission it did not do so in Judy.

It is now about six weeks ago that she went to get her wings, as she called it.

Shortly before she died she realized that mommy and daddy were not going to be in heaven yet, but she said: "I will look for Mr. Angel, I liked him...."

At this point I closed my eyes and folded my hands and said, "Lord, you know what is in this letter, did you notice the little wrinkles in the paper? Those wrinkles, Lord, are a mother's dried up tears; and the wet ones, they are mine. Why such a young child. Lord?

What's that? Another tear? That's not mine; I am sorry Lord I should have known that when your children suffer you suffer with them. You didn't want it this way either.

Thank you, Lord, for your promise that some day there will be, for your children, no more suffering, no more tears, no death but only eternal happiness."

Poems**Although...**

1

Though it's too cold to go out
 I want to venture through my front door
 To make snow angels
 To go sledding
 To do all the things pleased me as a child
 Things I don't make time for anymore

2

Though I've gotten too busy to notice
 I need the company of others
 Those who make me laugh
 Those who lead me to adventure
 Those who force me to think
 I have missed the stimulation of friends

3

Though there has been quiet
 In my mind the silence deafens
 No sound of dreams
 No sound of ambition
 No sounds of song
 So turn up the volume and mute this silence

4

Though it's too cold to go out
 I want to venture through my front door
 To make snow angels
 To go sledding
 To do all the things pleased me as a child
 Things I don't make time for anymore

Rebecca E. Gesch

Spring Snow

*Yesterday brilliant green
 shoots
 bacteria-laden chocolate mud
 sixty-three siskins singing
 water gurgling, trickling, bubbling*

*I rejoice
 at the ended reign
 of winter
 playing in puddles
 like the child*

*I am
 though bones
 creak, and muscles groan;
 a renaissance
 in a tired life
 is spring*

*But look and lament:
 snow
 covering green and brown
 freezing melt-water in its tracks*

*I prepare for despair
 of more waiting
 due to a demented groundhog
 natural process
 or weather front*

*While outside my window
 lies snow*

*waiting
 watching
 warming
 brooding:
 certain hope*

Curt Gesch



Gifts

Surfing the Third Wave – thrill or spill?

Harry der Nederlanden

The Reformed churches have perhaps seen more changes in the last 30 to 40 years than they have in three or four preceding generations. But over the last few decades of the 20th century, we have become quite used to periodic changes. Now we smirk when we recall that early in the last century some Reformed folk stalked out of church when hymns were introduced into the worship service or that the pre-pulpit handshake (now abandoned) raised controversy.

By now change has almost become a value in and of itself. If something hasn't changed for a few years, we must be stuck in a rut, or, even worse, we've turned it into a tradition. Openness is right up there with tolerance as one of our highest values.

There is, to be sure, a sense in which change is a value. We are urged to "sing a new song" for good reason. Not just because the old has grown stale or been surpassed. Making it new is simply part of making it our own, of adding our own creativity to the long history of praise and worship, of work and play to which God calls us. The Holy Spirit does not reduce us to carbon copies of the saints of bygone ages. He mobilizes and empowers us as people of our own time so we write songs and music that communicate in a unique way with our own time.

But there are changes that we challenge. We pull up short and say, "Wait a minute – let's take another look at this. Is this good?" I've never done an actual count, but I think there are more warnings in Scripture against simply going with the flow, against being an empty shirt blowing in the wind with every breeze, than there are urgings to go with it, to let yourself be wasted along like a kite. Unless it's by the wind that comes blowing from the now and future Kingdom. For there's that too – we are already part of the future. We are a new creation already with one antenna sticking up into the wholesale renewal that will come with Christ's return.

So it's no wonder that we're constantly being stretched between the old and the new, between keeping faith with what has been entrusted to us and what is being born. And being stretched is not always comfortable.

The Majority Report on Third Wave Pentecostalism prepared for the next CRC Synod is a stretch. Or, rather, it asks us to stretch. The Minority Report argues that these are not fruits for which we should stretch out our hands. The spiritual gifts associated with Third Wave Pentecostalism would potentially introduce some striking changes into our Reformed churches. There's no doubt about that. Are they part of a culture-wave we should view with suspicion and resist? Or should we happily surf along into the new future?

This is a rather stark either/or. The majority and the minority reports are not as far apart as Yes and No, North and South. They differ more in terms of emphasis. One begins with a receptive attitude and concludes with a long list of cautions; the other begins with the cautions and then acknowledges continuities.

But first let's see what this Third Wave business is all about. Many of us have heard about postmodernism and the emergent church. While Third Wave isn't entirely unrelated to this ferment, it is something distinct. The majority report admits that it's not a widely used term. It picks up the label from one of its advocates, Peter Wagner, one of the gurus of the church growth movement back in the 70's. Third Wave puts the phenomena that we're talking about firmly in the Pentecostal tradition. The First Wave was the eruption of Pentecostalism early in the 20th century; the Second Wave was the neo-Pentecostalism of the 60's and 70s that left a lot of debris along the beach. Now, we are told, we are being hit by another wave from the Pentecostal tradition.



Jesus and Jairus' daughter

But didn't we construct some erosion barriers in the 70s? What of the report on neo-Pentecostalism that was given to the churches some 35 years ago? What's wrong with that? This wave is different enough from the previous one that we need an entirely new report. While it builds on the 1973 report, much of that report does not apply.

In its overview, the Majority Report (let's simply call it Majority hereafter) distinguishes Third Wave from the previous Pentecostal and charismatic movements in the way they see the baptism with the Holy Spirit. While the former stressed the necessity of speaking in tongues as a sign that a person is baptized with the Holy Spirit, the Third Wave focuses on the Holy Spirit's work in renewing and empowering us for ministry. This may involve extraordinary things like speaking in tongues, physical and inner healing, receiving a word of prophecy, casting out evil spirits (individual and collective, personal and territorial), and other signs and wonders. The Majority stresses that this is not theologically at odds with biblical and Reformed orthodoxy. Unless, of course you're a cessationist. Maybe you don't know whether you are one? I didn't. A cessationist is someone who believes that the signs and wonders we read about in Acts happened only in New Testament times. Although not many of us have seen a repeat of the tongues of flame and the sound of the mighty wind of the first Pentecost, apparently, the 1973 report had already decided that there is no biblical basis for the cessationist belief.

Here the Majority takes a nasty swipe at those generations of Reformed folk who assumed that this was a one-time event in redemption history: it suggests that our reticence toward these sensational phenomena is probably rooted in the Enlightenment worldview that rejects the supernatural as superstition. I'm not sure that's fair to the Reformation churches that defended miracles and opposed Enlightenment deism might and main. Moreover, reticence over toward the kind of things promoted by the Third Wave hardly began at the time of the Enlightenment. But let's not get hung up here. Reformed theologians have always seen the present age as the age of the New Testament church, so the continuity is the overarching thing – not the differences, though there certainly are important differences.

The previous report, while defending the teaching that the Holy Spirit is given to all believers and that the conversion of the heart is a greater miracle than speaking in tongues, also acknowledged that the Holy Spirit gives certain special and diverse gifts to members of the body of

Christ. It even raised the possibility that new kinds of gifts might arise that were not seen in New Testament times.

However, for Second Wave Pentecostals such phenomena were associated with the baptism of the Spirit, without which there is no genuine conversion. This is the crucial difference with Third Wave: it treats spectacular gifts of the Spirit as distinct from the work of conversion and sanctification. So not everyone gets the gift of tongues, and outpourings of gifts can happen more than once. Third Wave intentionally distances itself from neo-Pentecostal theology and seeks to avoid the mood of judgmentalism and divisiveness that it tended to spawn.

This also means that it does not seek to raid existing churches and establish new ones, as happened in the 70's, but that it seeks to work within existing churches, aiming to revitalize members and renew those churches. Although the Majority stresses this peacekeeping theme, this does not mean that the introduction of such spectacular gifts doesn't cause friction and conflict within churches.

Let's take a little closer look at the gifts celebrated by the proponents of the Third Wave.

Prophecy

The church has always sought to be prophetic, but when Third Wavers speak of prophecy, they underline the belief that God still speaks to people today. By this they do not mean through a sermon or Bible passage or by the inner promptings of one's conscience, but by a direct word of wisdom from God. This may also be accompanied by instruction on how to apply such a revelation in a specific situation.

Prayer and healing

Again we are on familiar ground, for prayer has always been one of the weapons of the church. But it, too, gets a makeover. We are promised access to a more powerful kind of prayer, a prayer that shapes new realities. Christians have always prayed for healing when faced with illness, confident that God hears and answers such prayers. But the Third Wave model gives prayer a special oomph: in the proper framework, we may expect an increase in miraculous healings.

In this framework, some receive words of knowledge that enable the person praying to focus his prayers to work inner or outer healing for those prayed over.

Spiritual warfare

Reformed Christians have always known that we are engaged in spiritual warfare, and not just on a personal level but in the social and political arena as well. Kuyper liked to speak of the antithesis. Wherever we seek to live out of the power of the gospel, we become aware that we are not just struggling against flesh and blood but with spiritual powers. However, Third Wave introduces a whole new language and array of weapons. It speaks in much more specific terms of the enemy: it speaks of personal and territorial demons. There are cities, organizations, churches, and people, even Christians, who are attacked or indwelt by evil spirits. Some even claim the ability to identify ranks of demons and to know their names. Believers are taught to take authority over them in Jesus' name and to engage in direct warfare against them.

Again this is over and above such familiar efforts as opposing ideologies of neoliberalism or statism, poverty or drug abuse in the cities, racism in institutions, class warfare in unions and so on. Proponents claim to be able to evacuate demons from neighborhoods and cities by means of certain focused prayerful rituals.

Of these phenomena, the Majority says that they "are well-attested in the Bible and enthusiastically embraced in

Gifts

the Third Wave, but they are relatively unusual in Christian Reformed circles." That's phrased a bit parochially. They are unusual in a great many denominations – and they have been so for hundreds of years. The question arises: Why did the Holy Spirit withhold such gifts until the Pentecostal tradition discovered new techniques to arouse him to action?

The Majority claims that 40 per cent of CRC pastors are receptive to the Third Wave movement. I question that. If a pastor favors holding a special healing service or special prayer service that has imbibed a little from some of the authors associated with this movement that hardly means that they are Third Wavers. Some churches and some pastors have borrowed from the Anglican liturgy or held a Baptist-style altar call, but we don't therefore label them Anglican or Baptist. It is true that this is a trans-denominational movement, but it is still very strongly colored by its Pentecostal origins.

To explain the appeal of Third Wave spirituality, the Majority cites:

- a widespread reaction against the dogmatism and complacency of the established churches and a desire for revival;
- a reaction against the scientific worldview and the technological society (the anti-enlightenment theme);
- despair about the future and our capacity to solve global problems;
- the "functional deism" of the traditional churches as opposed to the seeker quest for a deeper spirituality.

The Minority Report, of course, tends to explain Third Wave appeal in terms of New Age influences, the yen for immediate results, a pursuit of "power religion" and a rejection of tradition and authority. No doubt, as with everything there are good motives and bad motives, positives and negatives.

The Majority does a good job of putting gifts in the framework of a Reformed worldview. It stresses that God's supernatural redemption of creation doesn't cancel out or leap over the creation, but by the power of the Spirit, God liberates, redirects and renews what he has made. Wherever he does so, he creates gifts for the church and the world – charismata. From this perspective, the Majority counsels: "there is no reason to question or to be suspicious of the contemporary manifestation of the charismata of which Paul speaks, *as long as they conform to biblical directives and common-sense pastoral guidelines.*" [My emphasis]

Ah, but there's the rub. We must not be suspicious of them as such, but of course we must not naively embrace whatever presents itself as a gift either. So we may not put our suspicion aside. Certainly the Majority does not, for it erects many warning flags or "cautions" at the end. For a movement or influence that we're supposed to welcome, why are so many warnings needed?

The Majority is actually quite aware of all sorts of possible abuses of the extraordinary gifts that the Third Wave introduces into the church. It mentions the danger that people will start to seek after such gifts and that we might begin to give them a higher value than ordinary ones. This would lead to a spiritual elitism.

On the matter of spiritual warfare, the Majority cautions: "We see a battle of the spirits not only in the lure of pornography or the fight against abortion but also in the movements promoting peacemaking and environmental stewardship and Christian scholarship. We ought therefore to be critical of those in the Third Wave who speak of spiritual warfare as though it were exclusively or primarily a matter of demon possession (perhaps more appropriately called demonization) and the casting out of unclean spirits in Christ's name."

The authors of the Majority Report declare that we must

see these extraordinary gifts on the same plane as the gifts of those who have worked hard in Christian education or diaconal ministry, for leadership, institution building and skilful craftsmanship are no less gifts of the Spirit. Nor is emotion more spiritual than intellectual insight.

This is a good emphasis. The Majority see the Third Wave gifts as an extension and enrichment of traditional gifts, providing an even wider array of gifts for the church of the future.

However, the Majority strikes me as a bit naive here. How can we *not* begin to value direct word revelations given by God over the flawed, tentative, contested interpretations given by pastors and theologians? How can we *not* opt for miraculous healings and the eviction of demons from entire organizations and cities when science and politics are often so slow and disappointing in their results?

But not only must we guard against ranking the "special" gifts higher than "ordinary" ones acquired by hard work, we must also be on guard against counterfeits. There are some who are undoubtedly going to be deluded into thinking they truly possess such gifts when they don't. And there are going to be some who pretend to have them because, in spite of all the cautions, this will give them status.

Let me give an example. One of the gifts is the ability to discern demons in fellow believers. Suppose someone in my church claims to discern an especially nasty demon lurking in some dark corner of my editor's soul? (Editors have often been closely affiliated with demons.) Should I thank him or her – or reply that there's actually a demon in his soul prompting him to criticize me? Sure, I'm being a bit facetious, but the Majority strikes me as being a bit pollyanna about the potential for creating conflict and division in the church. I can see old Wormwood salivating as he picks up his pen to write to Screwtape about the new tools Third Wave will provide for sowing mischief.

Surprises and boundaries

The Majority tells us that we should not be startled that God acts in wonderful and surprising ways to authenticate the gospel. I may be quibbling, but are we really talking about surprises here? Not in most cases – especially not if, as the Minority maintains, Third Wave at bottom is the pursuit of "power religion." The manifestation of laughter in the Vineyard churches, for example, is by now no more surprising than the routine speaking in tongues that is practiced in Pentecostal churches. And the element of surprise often seems to be what the Third Wave practitioners are trying to eliminate. Prayer, miraculous healing and spiritual warfare as they are practiced now in our midst yield surprises. But Third Wave practitioners claim they have ways to make them more consistently effective, that is, they promise to remove some of the uncertainty regarding outcomes. The Holy Spirit will be more at our command – or at least more attentive. For the life of me, I cannot see why this should be true.

One more quibble. The greater part of Christendom for the greater part of this era has drawn a boundary line limiting certain extraordinary gifts to the founding times of the New Testament era of which we are part. The Majority would have us lift that boundary because it isn't one clearly drawn by Scripture. However, it continues to observe another boundary: that between works done in the framework of the church and works done elsewhere. It may sound like a silly question, but why shouldn't doctors and therapists have access to similar supernatural powers in their work? Why shouldn't Christians working in labor relations or in politics receive miraculous insights and instruction and be able to command the demons of greed, lawlessness and poverty? What about teachers and professors – shouldn't the Holy

Spirit be amenable to giving them privileged knowledge and insight? Why should these manifestations be limited to the church?

The "ordinary graces" (celebrated in the article by Seerveld and in the story by Lou De Vries) sometimes flare up into something extraordinary. We have intuitions and insights, and react with extraordinary facility and grace at certain times, so much so that we ourselves feel them to have been special gifts on particular occasions. Most of us have shared such stories only to have others tell theirs, often with deep emotion.

But I do not think they can be domesticated and institutionalized and thus given status and authority. They are wild by nature. The Minority Report often charges the Majority with accepting Third Wave practices uncritically. That isn't really true. In fact, the Majority hedges them around with so many controls that any third Waver worth his salt will almost certainly feel that his gift is being put in a strait jacket. By the time the Majority is done with its constraints, these extraordinary gifts are so domesticated that they are no longer wild stallions but plow horses trained to follow a straight furrow. That removes all the romance; in fact, it brings them awfully close to what we already have.

While the Minority Report begins by pointing to the extremes and the dangers of the movement, the Majority begins by being receptive and showing a willingness to learn – but by the end of the report it does a pretty thorough job of calling these wild critters to heel. The leaders whose names are most closely associated with the Third Wave would certainly not submit to such containment and restraint.

Much of the divergence between the Majority and the Minority, it strikes me, is in terms of how each defines the Third Wave movement. The Majority assumes that the more well-known and sensational practitioners have actually gone beyond the pale and are therefore outside it. The Minority, on the other hand, believes that they are the natural and logical outcome of it.

The Minority warns that Third Wave practices – "revelatory prophecy, words of wisdom, words of knowledge, and dialogical prayer (in which revelations from God are received to guide life) – serve to contradict" the authority of God's Word for faith and life by adding a source of authority equal in status. It adds: "Deliberations, study committees, consensual agreements, majority votes, friendly and not so friendly disagreements are not part of the ecclesiastical ethos of Third Wave circles."

The cautions and advice added by the Majority are, of course, designed to prevent this from happening. The authors give no indication that they want to sacrifice anything of the CRC diet to gain the Third Wave high energy menu. They simply want to broaden the menu a bit.

I suspect, however, that there is a lot of truth to the Minority contention that the excesses are not marginal and incidental. The fact that the foremost representatives of Third Wave are leading their followers to crackpot extremes should give us pause. I'm not concerned that some practices challenge CRC identity, as the Minority puts it. That identity should be challenged. I think, however, that Third Wave practices embraced in toto will hasten the disintegration and disrespect for structure and authority that enable us to act in concord and will instead increase the individualism and disharmony in our churches.

In some ways, I regret these reports, Minority as well as Majority. I'm afraid that certain things pertaining to the discipline of prayer and healing services will now become associated with a wacky movement. There is little or no reason to associate some moderate forms of these practices with the Third Wave movement, and they have been easily assimilated by some CRC churches.

Ecclesiastes

Life as play

A feast is made for laughter,
and wine makes life merry,
but money is the answer for everything. Ecclesiastes 10:19

A. A. van Ruler

It very important for us to see that we can do something sheerly out of pleasure. Everything we do need not be done out of necessity. There are also things we could easily refrain from doing. We don't do them because they are useful. We simply do it - perhaps because we feel like it, or because it gives us pleasure.

Let's read the Preacher's words in this light. We may also interpret his words as judgmental - that he is talking about wild parties. But that reading isn't obvious. We can also read his observations positively, in the sense that it is important that people can also do things simply for enjoyment.

It is interesting that he speaks first of all about feasting and eating. We can also have a meal simply for pleasure. Playing football or the flute are different: they have no utility or necessity. We do them simply for our enjoyment, because we feel like it. They are purely forms of play or art.

Sitting down for a meal is quite different. Making a meal is something we have to do even if we don't much feel like it. Regular mealtimes are a necessary part of life; they are not merely a form of play but a needful, serious business.

Yet, human beings also make an art out of meals; they stylize them and make them playful. They make a feast of them. Necessity is turned into freedom, the useful into the pleasurable, and seriousness into play. Almost all cultures do this at a wedding, for example. A wedding feast is prepared almost entirely for our enjoyment.

But there are many other things people do simply for enjoyment. I've already mentioned the broad areas of sport and art. Not everything in life is done out of bitter necessity, deadly earnest or pure utility. We also do things out of sheer pleasure, for no other reason than our own enjoyment.

In earlier times - actually in almost the entire history of Christianity - such enjoyment was judged very differently. A fundamental distinction was made between *usus*, utility, on the one hand, and *fructus*, enjoyment, on the other. We may use the things

of this world and this life, it was said. In fact, we need to use them to the best of our ability. We must extract from them what is in them. But we may only use them with an eye to their utility in stark earnestness. We may not *enjoy* them. We may only enjoy God and heaven and eternity.

This notion left a deep impression on the Western psyche. Many still live under the influence of this fundamental conviction. And many more are influenced by their opposition to it. They don't want to choose against the world and for God, so they choose for the world and against God. Doesn't an important part of the spiritual crisis of the Western psyche arise from this problematic?

I'm convinced that this schema - that we may only use the world and only enjoy God - has led Christians astray for centuries. It is unbiblical. The world was created by God, called forth out of nothing. He willed it. And it is therefore good. In fact, we cannot genuinely and fully enjoy God without enjoying his world. God doesn't want to be known, owned and served without his world.

But then we must enjoy the things of this world and life genuinely. That is the other side of the coin. But this is not as easy as it sounds. To do this, natural man needs to undergo a total conversion and regeneration.

We are not able by nature to enjoy this world. We really are not genuinely and fundamentally inclined to do so. We do not react positively to the fact that we exist. We tend, instead, to despair about the world and life. We complain that the world and life have no meaning. We don't seem to know why we are here. We overlook the fact that God says that the meaning of existence consists, among other things, in cherishing the world just as he cherished it when he freely created it. We may try to enjoy something of the world and of life, but often we start from a fundamental despair: let us eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. What a strangely blue, distempered, absurdist attitude!

Then we are not actually doing it because it pleases us - in the deep



William Kurelek: A Christmas feast sponsored by The Salvation Army.

sense that with God we take joy in the things of this world. This is what conversion and regeneration are all about, namely, that our will becomes one with God's will; that we begin to experience this world as his; and that we take exactly the same joy in it as God. To put it in New testament terms, the point is that we love with the same love with which we are loved, not just our neighbors, but also ourselves and everything that exists.

This is what is at issue between biblical teachings and modern sensibility. In modernity Western man has become oriented to the world. That is great, says the Bible, but do you truly love the world to its very ground, unconditionally, eternally like our Creator and Redeemer does? Or in the depths of your heart are you still bewailing the fact that in essence the world and life are nothing? Do you let the approach of death, for example, intimidate you to the point of despair? Doesn't this mean that you don't believe that death has been defeated?

Our text adds that curious, innocent phrase: "and wine makes life merry." Teetotalers have problems with such Bible passages. I regret that I can offer them no help, for this is not the only place Scripture makes such an observation.

A couple of things do surprise me in this connection. First, that many people need such a stimulant to make them merry and thus to recover the joy in being and God's joy in things. Second, that wine - a highly esteemed beverage - has the capacity to make life merry, albeit only for a short time. This is surprising, isn't it - that God has made the grapes to grow? It certainly every bit as surprising as the fact that there is dust and rodents.

Then we come to the phrase: "but money is the answer for everything." Those who have money are able to justify doing many things just for their enjoyment. Sometimes it looks as if they can justify almost anything. As long as they have the money,

anything goes. Money is power.

The Preacher is here only describing and making observations. He is not making judgments. Is he also giving a warning here? Is he touching on the limits of luxury and the enjoyment of life? Is he perhaps warning that the highest wisdom - taking life as it is, as play - can in a flash flip over into its opposite, into the highest folly?

This would turn the text into its opposite. Then the Preacher would no longer be addressing the extremely important viewpoint - that we humans may enjoy this world as play along with God, but the no less important viewpoint that we humans can also lose the playfulness of existence in a very fundamental way.

There is no real contradiction here. They belong together. Life is godly play. But we can lose it. Then we end up with the devil. This is more than a logical dialectic. It is the conflict at the heart of all human life: will we play the game - the game of love - and win? Or will we lose?

APRIL 2, 2007

Life

Miss Budge chooses a fearless life

Daphne Simpkins

Mildred Budge was just walking into her favorite store when a man clutching a woman's purse dashed by her. A pretty housewife in white tennis clothes chased him screaming, "Thief! Thief!"

Automatically, Mildred Budge clutched her own purse tighter and prayed, "Lord, save us from ourselves."

As the running man bounded into an old pick-up truck, the lady jumped onto his back bumper still screaming, "Thief! Thief!"

The man tossed the stolen handbag out the window. The housewife leapt from the truck and went to reclaim her treasure.

"That was a dangerous thing to do," Miss Budge told God, for in her daily life there were not many other people to tell the story of her life to. In this way, Miss Budge engaged in what is known as unceasing prayer. Then, feeling inexplicably wounded by witnessing a thief in action and a woman putting herself in harm's way for what would surely rust this side of heaven, Miss Budge walked inside and over to the store's snack bar.

Miss Budge was not hungry, but her stomach felt troubled by the image of a thief stealing a woman's purse, and because right after she prayed, she had looked down at the items on her shopping list and suddenly didn't want them. Confronting that loss of appetite was frightening.

Feeling pale, she ordered French fries and a chocolate shake. Miss Budge drank several deep swallows. It tasted cheap and artificial, but it was cold and anesthetizing. She drank some more to get her money's worth. Miss Budge had gained weight over the years just getting her money's worth out of cheap-tasting food. The French fries were hot and salty though. Mildred Budge loved salt and sugar — often together, though neither one of them was good for one's health. As she considered this paradox in her own behavior, she saw the woman whose purse had been stolen reappear in the doorway. Talking animatedly with the store guard, she suddenly pointed at Miss Budge and said, "That lady saw it all!"

The officer walked purposefully over to Mildred who now felt faint. The strongest waves of weakness were coming over her, and she wondered if the evil one was attacking her; he did that sometimes. But Miss Budge had never been sure of when the evil one was the true villain or when her own nature was reflecting the effects of the Fall, which people didn't discuss much anymore. Sin was treated mostly as an embarrassment these days. Miss Budge knew better. Sin was dangerous; it could rob you of an authentic life in Christ. Miss Budge was a repeat sinner, and a regular repenter.

She prayed unceasingly, "Lord, save us



from ourselves. Save me."

"Ma'am, may I ask your name?" the guard asked with his notepad ready.

"Midriff Bulge," Miss Budge replied, and then winced. "Mildred Budge." She amended. "My name is Mildred Budge."

"I believe you," the officer said. "What did you see?"

Miss Budge considered the question and answered it honestly. "At first, I saw a lady chasing a dangerous man through dangerous traffic for only money. Then, I saw people buying stuff they don't need. We are all too busy eating French fries and drinking bad milkshakes to cover up how afraid we are that if we give up stuff and salt and sugar there will be nothing left. We are afraid life won't taste good without all this. Even that lady who chased the crook — she's really afraid."

The guard ignored the way the older woman's mind wandered. Maybe she was growing deaf. "Did you see his face?" he asked slowly and loudly.

Miss Budge smiled ruefully. "He looked like everybody."

The guard put away his notepad, nodded his thanks, and walked back to the Victim-Hero.

As the waves of fear that had almost made her faint subsided, Miss Budge tossed out her milkshake and fries. She reread her shopping list. She already had the same stuff at home except for that lipstick called Ruby Woo. It was an exquisite shade of red. Except for that exquisite lipstick, Miss Budge was certainly stockpiling, like her mother before her.

Sometimes shopping made her feel close to her mama, who had been gone a long time. But the acquisition of stuff filled neither the hole left by her mother's death nor any of the other vacuums in her life. Miss Budge saw that in the buying of stuff, she was postponing the inevitable. She must face the vacuums — experience emptiness created by the will of God — and try not to fill those holes with substitutes that would taste like a cheap milkshake. She must fill it with the truth of a life lived authentically in Christ by agreeing with him in all things. That's what real repentance was.

"Today," Mildred Budge proclaimed, turning her back resolutely on the store, "I

Don't miss opportunities "under your nose"

Lisa M. Petsche

Sometimes we overlook life's small joys while searching for the big ones.

The recent March break was a low-key one for our family — very unstructured for a change.

Typically we've done a series of day trips. Last year we took an overnight trip to Niagara Falls. But the plans we made a few years ago have been the most unique to date: we vacationed without leaving town.

To provide some background: Years ago, I used to venture downtown at least five days a week. Not only did I work in the city's core, but because I had a transit pass, I also headed there for shopping and entertainment, unconcerned about traffic congestion or parking costs.

For more than a decade, though, I've been working outside the city centre. And there's a variety of restaurants plus a shopping mall close to home. So I rarely go downtown anymore.

One day it occurred to me, with a shock, that my kids had never been there. They were suburbanites through and through. That's when my idea for an "explore the core" mini family vacation was born.

I made a list of everything there is to see and do in the downtown area. Then I searched local tourism Web sites to get details such as hours of operation and admission fees for various attractions.

That led to another idea: to really get into the tourist spirit, why not book a night in a downtown hotel? The kids were excited at the prospect. They'd never stayed in a hotel before.

On the much-anticipated weekday afternoon, we tossed lightly packed duffel bags into the trunk of our car and headed west. A great thing about being hometown tourists was that we didn't need a map — and travel time was minimal.

The first thing we did when we arrived downtown was tour City Hall. In the lobby we picked up tourism brochures containing coupons.

Then we walked to the Art Gallery. The main exhibit featured treasures of ancient China. Our two younger kids happily played in the children's activity area after they tired of viewing the artifacts and other works of art.

I am going to choose a fearless life. I am going to be unafraid of what life feels like without being all covered up or weighed down with stuff that isn't what I truly want."

Determined, Miss Budge tossed her shopping list in the trash can and marched back to her car. She placed her hands on the steering wheel and explained to God, "I do still want that lipstick called Ruby Woo. You know how I feel about the color red — on its own. I love red." She took a breath and continued.

Finally it was time to check in to our chosen hotel. The kids were awed by the tastefully decorated lobby, which included a water fountain. And they would have ridden the elevator all day if we'd let them. They were equally thrilled with our room, with its perfectly made queen-size beds, large sofa bed, duplicate sinks, tiny toiletries and ninth-floor view of the city and harbour.

Within minutes, though, they were begging to use the pool, which featured a two-storey water slide. After more than an hour of swimming and sliding, we headed out for supper. There were several conventional and fast food restaurants to choose from within a few blocks' radius.

Afterwards we strolled around, taking in the downtown sights and sounds. Then it was back to the hotel for another swim, followed by a movie. Thanks to all that activity (including countless sprints up the 27 steps to the water slide), the kids easily fell asleep in spite of their general excitement.

In the morning we had breakfast at a nearby café and then paid one more visit to the pool.

After check-out, it was off to the city square to experience the farmers' market (including "dead fish with eyes" and "chickens with feet"), shop and have lunch. A visit to the public library's impressive central branch was next on our agenda. Then we toured a museum I used to pass daily but had never been through. On our way back to the car park we made some purchases at the market.

As we drove home to suburbia, the kids gave our excursion rave reviews. The short car ride was the icing on the cake.

We didn't get to all the attractions on our list, so we'll probably make a repeat trip.

One thing's for certain: this family's not taking its hometown for granted anymore.

Our experience proved that opportunities for fun, learning and adventure are "right under your nose," to use my young nephew's favorite expression. We need only open our eyes, and our minds, to the possibilities.

Lisa M. Petsche is a mother of three and a freelance writer specializing in family life.



"But I want to wait a while on Ruby Woo. And I want an adventure. What I really want is courage so that I can choose a life free of covetousness. I want to live my life — not consume it. Will you help me?"

And with that prayer in motion, wending its way around her heart, moving in her mind, doctoring her soul, Miss Budge sent her spirit on ahead to her house; and then, she purposefully aimed her car in the same direction.

History

Sad Irish history on a St. Lawrence River island

Maynard van der Galien

I'm sure most people don't know the true story why thousands of poor peasant Irish farmers came to Canada in the 1840's. Yes, there was a potato crop failure because of a potato blight and the Irish were starving. But that's not the whole story. To understand how the Irish people suffered you have to go to Grosse Ile, an island in the St. Lawrence River, 50 km east of Quebec City.

There certainly was a famine – the Great Famine of 1847-48 – but you could call it an artificial famine. People were starving, but not because there was a shortage of food in Ireland. Food was going elsewhere. It happens even today in countries with evil regimes.

Grosse Ile dominates the Isle-aux-Grues archipelago in the St. Lawrence River. From 1832 to 1937, this cold, windswept rocky island served as a quarantine station for the Port of Quebec, the main point of arrival for immigrants to Canada until World War I. In those years, more than four million immigrants entered Canada at Quebec City.

Doctors and inspectors boarded the many ships anchored at Grosse Ile. If any of the passengers were found to be ill, everyone on board would have to be examined on the island. Those who were healthy could well end up getting sick and die on the island. The cramped buildings and tents had hundreds of sick people with cholera or typhus sleeping on boards with bits of straw for bedding. In the black days of 1847, most of the island's temporary residents slept in army tents.

You will be touched, as I was, by the human drama that marks Grosse Ile history. Some of the buildings might even remind you of a concentration camp, especially the restored Disinfection Building. It held massive ovens for steaming clothing and powerful showers for cleansing bodies. The huge equipment is still in place just as it was in the late 1800's. The men in our tour group last October were especially interested in the generator, water pump, ovens and massive coal-fired furnaces. I saw a sign near a furnace stating it took 1500 tons of coal annually shipped in from Nova Scotia to run the operations on the island.

More than 7500 people are buried there, most of them Irish who fell victim to typhus in 1847. Some say that number could be as high as 12,000.

Parks Canada gives guided tours of the island between mid-May and mid-October. On shore there's a large sign that says: Grosse Ile and the Irish Memorial National Historic Site of Canada.

A shuttle takes visitors to the village. A walking trail leads to the Celtic Cross and the Memorial. The completely restored Disinfection Building houses an exhibition allowing you to relive the extraordinary events that mark the island's history. Two hundred people worked on the island during the height of the immigration.



One of the hotels on Grosse Ile

no medical attention, and lack of ventilation fed the hunger of the pestilence that afflicted the immigrants.

On Telegraph Hill, the highest point of the rocky island, overlooking the wide river is a 60-foot high Celtic stone cross that was erected in 1909. It proclaims its message of grief. It bears three inscriptions. One inscription reads (in part): Children of the Gael died in their thousands on this island having fled from the laws of foreign tyrants and an artificial famine in the years 1847-48.

We walked to the so-called Irish Cemetery. There are a few rows of white token crosses. They sit on top of ridges, but the mass burials – three deep in individual wooden boxes (coffins) – are clearly visible in rows. The ground has a depression – sagged in considerable over the years.

There is a memorial on the island with the names of the thousands of people who died while on the island. We saw many familiar Ottawa Valley names.

There is also a memorial to the Doukabors who were quarantined on the island in the late 1800's.

No one died while at Grosse Ile during the last 10 years of operation thanks to medical advances.

That's just some of the sad but fascinating history of the island.

Suffering from malnutrition, the poor im-

migrants were easy victims to the typhus that was carried by the lice that moved from person to person in crowded holds of ships. Lack of sanitation, lack of washing facilities,

Maynard van der Galien lives in Renfrew, Ont. He enjoys traveling on guided tours.

Christian identity

Wounded healers

John G. Stackhouse, Jr.

By now we've all heard the latest about Ted Haggard, former pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and former head of the National Association of Evangelicals. Brother Haggard – and, as a fellow Christian, he is my brother – was found to have been having sexual relations with a male prostitute in Denver. He resigned in disgrace, and has since been in counseling.

According to the *Denver Post*, the four pastors in charge of overseeing New Life Church made a surprising – to some, an astonishing, and to others, an absurd – announcement. One of them explained Haggard's three-year relationship with the man in these terms: Haggard "is completely heterosexual. That is something he discovered. It was the acting-out situations where things took place. It wasn't a constant thing."

Columnists have had a field day with this recent announcement, of course, with many wondering what stresses could possibly drive a "completely heterosexual" man into the arms of a male lover. Others have simply gotten the story wrong, saying that Haggard is claiming to have been "cured" of homosexuality in just three months, rather than the years that might be expected for rebuilding such a basic component of one's personality – if indeed such a thing is possible at all. The media circus continues.

In all of this, I am reminded of the late Henri Nouwen, the superb spiritual writer who taught at Harvard and Yale before spending his last years in pastoral service at L'Arche, Jean Vanier's community for the developmentally disabled. Nouwen also wrestled with homosexuality – "wrestled" with it because his religious beliefs, like Haggard's, diagnosed it as a deformation of the personality.

Also like Haggard, Nouwen maintained a position of spiritual advisor to many. His sexual difficulty did not disqualify him from offering his considerable gifts to others – nor should Haggard's have kept him from pastoral service.

Unlike Haggard, however, Nouwen refused to engage in preaching or public activism against homosexuality. He avoided any risk of incurring the taint of hypocrisy, which is a far more serious problem – in the Bible and in the public eye – than is homosexuality.

Nouwen gave us the lovely phrase, the "wounded healer." Some have exploited this term – as all lovely things are vulnerable to exploitation – to suggest that you can be entirely comfortable with all manner of sins and still be a spiritual leader. You can be proud, you can be lustful, you can be greedy, you can wrathfully dismiss dissenting colleagues, and on down through the seven deadlies – but hey, you're a "wounded healer" and darned popular – in other words, "blessed in your ministry." So it's okay, right?

No, says Nouwen, by word and by example. Serve, yes, offering your God-given talents to make God's beloved world a better place. But serve out of consciousness of your wound, which means to serve in humility, in compassion, in patience. "There but for the grace of God go I."

Nouwen's insight is that, clergy or not, we must not wait to become perfect before we help others. We can help them, that is, precisely as fellow sufferers, with genuine fellow feeling – but also with a strong and clear sense of our limitations.

According to Nouwen, God may well allow some of those wounds to remain a while – for as we endure their pain, their shame, and their debility, we may be given the gift of remembering just how needy each of us is, and how great the possibilities of restoring love.

John G. Stackhouse, Jr., is Sangwoo Youtong Chee Professor of Theology and Culture at Regent College.

Weaver woman

Weaver woman travels with wisdom in the now, forming patterns with the fortune of day to day happenings.

Susan McCullen, from:
"Songs from the Heart"

Until I was forty years old I was home raising five children. By then I had lived in Europe with our family three separate times, once for three years and twice for a year; the first time for my husband's post-doctorate appointment, and later for two separate sabbaticals. Our permanent residence was in Montreal, away from extended family. Email did not exist, and the phone was expensive. We learned to be close as a family and independent as people. Not all of it was easy.

During those years my thinking paradigm shifted from supporting other people mostly, to also supporting myself. Not that my family did not support me. We all supported each other, in our own way for better or for worse. I was home more than anyone else so I cleaned up, cooked, and managed the household. In my free time I biked, walked, knitted sweaters, volunteered, and read books. They were good years for our family.

Was I content? In some ways I was. I counted my blessings every single day. I knew I had much to be thankful for. Yet, at times, I felt a nagging sense of incompleteness. It was hard to stimulate myself every single day, even if I enjoyed my family and my activities. Sometimes I felt discouraged. When that happened I berated myself: "You have so much to be thankful for. You are selfish to want more."

I know the nagging sense of incompleteness, in spite of many blessings. I also know the wonder of the path towards greater inner wholeness. We all travel that path to wholeness. The walk is very individual and the road is crooked. Unexpected bends have a way of baffling us. But all of it is the process of becoming who we are meant to be in our small corner of the world.

Twenty-two years ago our lives changed and our family moved to Edmonton. The kids were teenagers. I decided to apply for the registered nursing program in the local community college. The program had a long waiting list and I was told I might not get in by September. In August I heard I was accepted. I was delighted. Several days later, in a sudden bout of panic, I called the college to say I wanted to withdraw from the program. "How will I be able to manage my family and also study full-time?" I asked.

The woman on the other end of the line calmly and wisely answered: "Why don't you just try it, and if it becomes too difficult you drop a course or two."

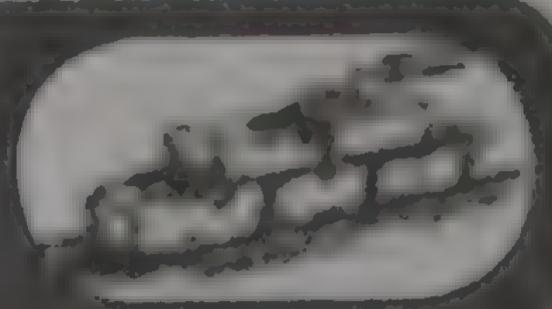
As I hung up the receiver an old memory flashed through my mind. It was the voice of my grade nine counselor advising me: "You want to be a nurse, but you think you might have to work in an office to help your family income. Why don't you take the courses you need for nursing, and take typing as an option?"

The wisdom of my counselor in high school changed the course of my future, as did the wisdom of the counselor at the college. I followed the advice of both. It was wisdom in the moment. I must add that I had freedom to follow that advice. I went back to school as a mature student and needed no upgrading for nursing and my typing skills came in handy for writing university papers a few years later. I have never worked in an office. My family was no worse for wear.

For the past twenty years I have worked as a nurse in various professional contexts. My view of life is broader now than it was years ago. My personal issues then, reflected the society I lived in. They were mostly issues faced by European and North American women. Our dilemma was whether we should stay home to care for our families or expand our personal horizons and work outside the home.

Building Trust

Vicky Van Andel Ed.



It was a time when motherhood was not socially valued.

In the meantime, knowing about the stress of trying to do it all, women are more assertive about motherhood. It is the most important job they'll ever do, and I agree. The concern of today is that many women are not free to choose between motherhood and working outside the home. They have to go to work to supplement their family income. A good outcome of the dilemma of my day is that fathers are now sharing more in the task of raising their children. Some even claim fatherhood as their vocation.

Our world is bigger now. Over the past decades we know a lot more about the suffering of people elsewhere in the world. Many of the stories we hear are from women. They are not stories about whether to care for kids or go to work. Rather, they are about injustices, abuse, and immense pain and suffering that is scarring their souls.

My life is a picnic compared to the lives of the grandmothers in Africa who care for their grandchildren because AIDS has wiped out a whole generation of parents. Or illiterate rural families in India who hide their daughters because they are an economic burden. Or women who are sold for sex.

How valid are the personal journeys of people like us, compared to those of women living in poverty, with few options? We may wonder about that. But all personal journeys are valid. Our stories reflect who we are, in the place we are planted. Our calling is to grow into who we are meant to be before God. Our goal is to bring peace to our relationships. We can do that only when we have cultivated peace in our own hearts. If beyond that, we also have the opportunity to bring peace to people around the world, we are doubly blessed.

My quest for peace has included a desire for equal opportunities for women and men in society and the church. From a global perspective, the concept of equality is really very relative. I know that before God, I am equal to all people the world over. But my life is not equal to that of a poor woman in Africa. Compared to the shepherdess in the Andes, I have a lot more resources. Looking at the big picture, it may be more fitting to strive for freedom rather than equality. We all need freedom to do what we need to do, freedom to be responsible; freedom to make decisions in our own social context. We need the freedom to live in a place where human rights are respected.

My personal story serves as an example of the impact the gift of wisdom in the moment can have on a person's life. We can all strive for wisdom in the moment. Life has many opportune moments; the art is to be open to them. It is equally important to have the freedom to respond to opportunities. Let's challenge ourselves to be open to giving and receiving wisdom in the moment and respecting freedom for all.

Let's be weaver women.

Vicky Van Andel is the editor of this column. Anyone who would like to contribute to this column is invited to contact her via e-mail at: vickyv@telus.net

Reflections



Welcome to
my perch
Bert Witvoet

I believe in miracles

We had an interesting discussion at our church. The setting was an Alpha presentation by Nicky Gumbel on the topic "Does God heal Today?" Nicky thought that the answer was yes. He

recounted a few experiences from the past that helped him break down his own skepticism. He then went on to talk about healing in the Old and New Testaments, as well as in Church history. He continued to talk about what is meant by healing. Overall, he gave a satisfactory and realistic answer, I thought. The main idea that emerged is that God still heals miraculously today, but that not being healed is not a lack of faith. God is sovereign, and he has his own good purposes.

When we pray for physical healing, we can expect three answers: "Yes," "Not Yet," or "No." And the "Yes" can also be a partial healing. Any of these answers are legitimate answers to our prayers, and in no way diminish the importance and efficacy of a believer's prayer. Regardless of the outcome, we may always trust that God will answer our prayer in ways that are good for us and show his love.

Modern medicine

What struck me about the discussion that followed was that there was a fair bit of skepticism about whether or not God still heals today in the form of miracles. Not that people doubted God's ability to perform miracles. And people do want to believe that God still provides the church with the gift of healing. But maybe modern medicine has replaced the need for miracles, and maybe we can say that doctors and nurses have been given the gift of healing? I can understand that position quite well. Medical knowledge has improved tremendously, and we can see healing that results from medical intervention as an answer to our prayers. Add to that the fact that a lot of Christians have been turned off by so-called faith healers like Benny Hinn, and the end result may be that we don't trust these money-making faith healers any further than we can throw a crutch.

But when Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12 about the gift of healing present in the church of his day, he wasn't talking about medical practitioners. Nor should we think that the Spirit is less generous today in equipping his church for the common good with a special gift for healing. The gift of healing is not the same as someone's ability through talent and training to diagnose an illness and prescribe efficacious drugs.

There was a time when I would have been satisfied with the modern medicine explanation for the gift of healing. I used to be quite comfortable saying that miracles occurred in the days of Jesus and the apostles because the gospel needed to be spread and would benefit from an extra boost in the form of miracles. I argued more or less along the lines that we don't need miracles as much now that the church has been established.

In fact, we used to poke fun at faith healing. I remember hearing a story about a faith healing event that supposedly took place in Sneek (a Dutch town near where I lived). A faith healer had come to town, and hundreds of people flocked to the big tent where the meeting was held. After the meeting, a man came running out of the tent shouting, "I can walk again." A little crowd soon formed around him. "Were you healed at the service," one man asked him. "No," was the answer. "Someone stole my bike again." I thought it was a pretty funny story. Actually, I still do. I love stories that poke fun even at our fascination with miracles. But today I tell the story differently, fully realizing that it has a boomerang effect. I know that our view of miracles and faith healing can be superficial and arrogant.

God's mysterious actions

I no longer hold to the view that God no longer performs miracles in our midst. I think it's rather presumptuous to establish what God or will not do at any given time in history anyway. Besides, there are too many credible stories around that testify that the Spirit of God is still at work in unexpected and incomprehensible ways. Perhaps it is because, as I get older, I am less impressed with human ability to reason and figure things out, and more struck with wonder at God's world and its mysteries.

At the same time, I think we use the term "miracle" rather loosely. When we narrowly escape an accident, we call it a miracle. When a baby is born we may look at this perfectly formed creature and call her a miracle. What we mean, of course, is that a newborn child makes us stand in awe at how such a tiny person can be so wonderfully made. Our use of the term miracle includes all kinds of things we can't explain or didn't expect or find overwhelming. But such usage focuses on a category of events that is miles away from such truly miraculous events as the turning of water into wine or making a blind man see. Such miracles as Jesus and his disciples performed few of us ever experience.

The supernatural

There is another term used in the context of miracles that causes much confusion. I'm talking about the word "supernatural." When Jesus turned water into wine, was that a supernatural act? Professor Al Wolters of Redeemer University College does not think so, at least I heard him say as much at a workshop at the Ontario Christian Teachers Convention last fall. He stands in a long tradition of Reformed thinkers who espouse that belief. There is nothing "supra-natural" about the gift of healing," said Wolters. Other religions can also testify to gifts of healing being present, or to the speaking in tongues. According to Wolters, all these charismatic phenomena are creational in their origin.

I like that perspective. Always have. Saying that extraordinary healing is creational takes nothing away from the power of the Holy Spirit as he manifests himself in the life of the church and the world. The creation was not only *made* by God in the Beginning, but it continues to be upheld by and infused with his Holy Spirit. And miracles are an integral part of that maintenance function of the Spirit. Think about it – has there ever been a healing that went beyond the creation? Has someone who lost all his teeth while an adolescent or adult ever been given a new set of teeth at the command of a faith healer? Did anyone ever grow an extra leg as a result of prayer? Not that I know of. Even the miracles of Jesus are miracles that show the Spirit working through and within the person or creation.

Jesus did not bypass the creation and its norms when he turned water into wine, either. He commanded a part of creation to follow an unusual process, granted. He submitted it to the will of God. But he did not call forth wine *ex nihilo* when he performed a miracle. He infused the water with regenerating power. I don't know how miracles work. I don't even know how an "unmiraculous" act of nature such as the healing of a wound works. But I believe that Jesus brought the stimulating impulse of God to work out something that is not foreign to the creation. And he performed these miracles as a Spirit-endowed human being, not as God. In fact, he told his disciples that they could perform greater miracles than he did.

Perhaps if we had not fallen into sin that kind of power would have been available to us all. But as it is, we are under the sentence of decay and death, and we

often stand powerless over against the destructive forces of death. But God does from time to time interject his divine power of healing in the midst of this decay. It doesn't ultimately solve the problem of decay and death, of course. We need Jesus' death and resurrection for that. Even Lazarus died again some time after his resurrection. Miraculous healing is a temporary blessing that God sometimes gives us when we dare to pray for healing.

Faith in science

It's a sign of the time, I guess, that so many people no longer believe in the possibility of miraculous healing. We are surrounded by a culture that relies mostly on science and technology to rescue us from the ravages of death. Of course, the advances of medical science are also expressions of the powers of God laid in creation. We may thank God for his providence when we are healed by ingesting an extraction of herbs or metals – the building blocks of our physical bodies. But it pleases God from time to time to go beyond the powers of medicine and bring about unusual results for the purpose of his own kingdom.

Miracles are nothing in and of themselves. They are part of God's strategy in advancing the kingdom of heaven in this world. They are signposts of the new heaven and the new earth. They are also expressions of a loving God. But they are not to be sought for their own sake or for our own pleasure and comfort. Lots of people in Jesus' own time wanted to witness miracles for the "WOW" experience, but Jesus was inclined not to satisfy their lusts. We do well always to echo the words spoken by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane: "Not my will, but your will be done." Within that kingdom perspective, we may trust that God will manifest extra-ordinary displays of his healing power.

This belief gives us the confidence to pray for healing, even to engage in the laying on of hands or calling for a healing service in our churches. I say this with some hesitation because the "practice" of healing so easily becomes subject to abuse. Jesus himself warned the Pharisees and teachers of the law: "A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign!" When it comes to asking for a miracle, we tread on holy ground. I'm not sure whether God will entrust a consumerist society with the gift of healing. Something tells me that God works his wonders more readily in times of great need and oppression. Healing is not a luxury item. Even Jesus could not do miracles in the loveless and superficial atmosphere of his hometown, Nazareth. Asking for miraculous intervention requires faith.

Still, I do think that we in the Reformed faith community have much to learn when it comes to accepting the working of the Spirit in our midst. We could be more smitten with a sense of mystery and childlike wonder. According to the Apostle Paul, it starts with eagerly desiring the greater gifts: faith, hope and love, and of these three, love has preeminence. "Follow the way of love," said Paul. But he adds: "and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy." If we allow the Spirit to have full sway in our personal and communal lives, then, the other gifts will follow – also the gift of healing.

Bert Witvoet is the former editor of CC, now retired, who stays active by editing the Christian Educators Journal and preaching the occasional sermon. He tries to stay informed by hearing and reading the daily news and Reformed by looking for writers and speakers who can tell the forest from the trees.



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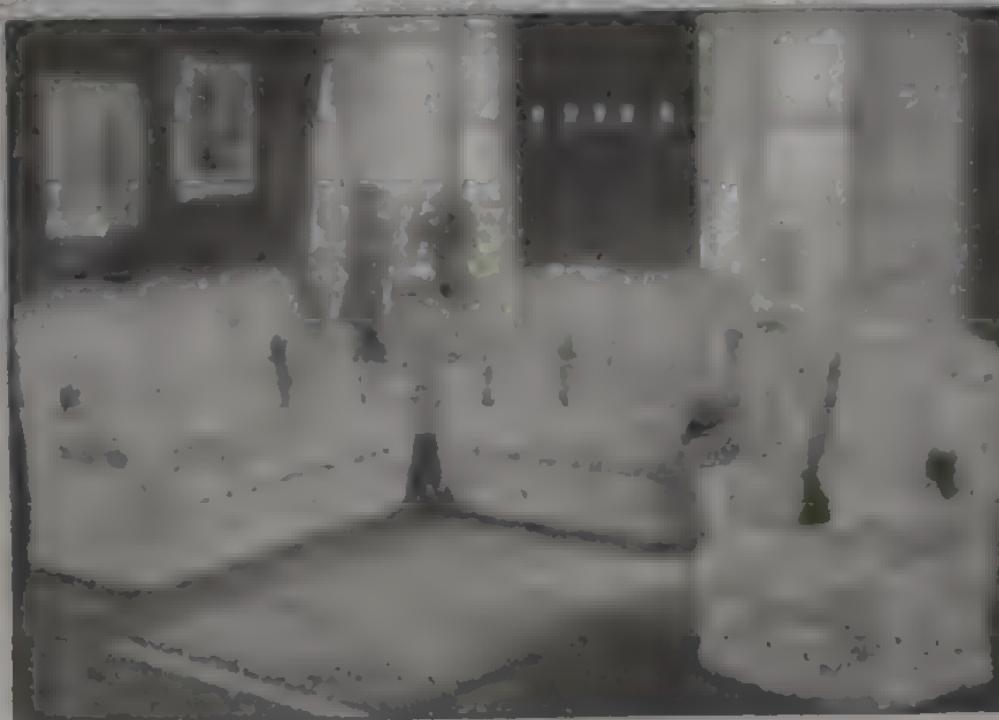
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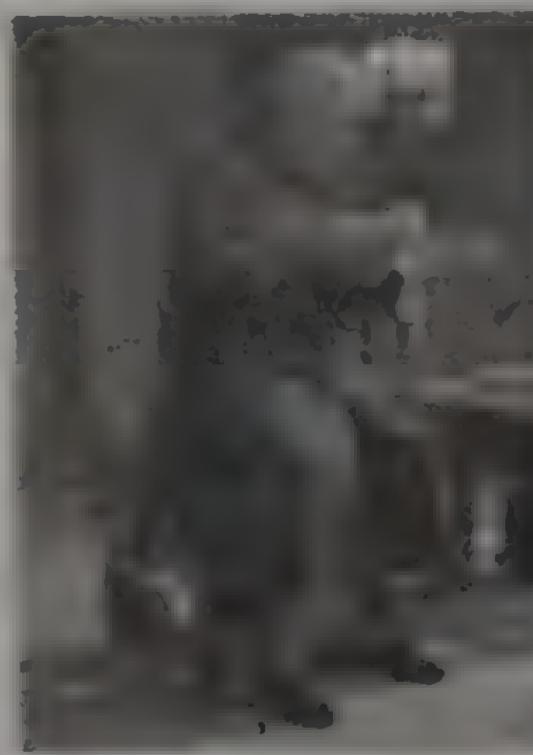
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<p>DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION <i>Christian Courier</i> is published on alternate Mondays. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Tuesday, 13 days prior to publication date.</p> <p>RATE: (GST added to rates listed) All personal and family announcements: \$6.00 per square inch. rose@christiancourier.ca Display advertising re. businesses and organizations: \$8.00 per square inch. email: ads@christiancourier.ca PHOTOS: There is a processing fee of \$25 for the inclusion of a photograph with a personal or family announcement. Photo space is not charged per square inch but we reserve the right to determine published photo size. Please note that we cannot use a faxed photo. We need either an original photo (which we will return) or a downloadable internet image.</p> <p>PERSONAL ADS: <i>Christian Courier</i> would be pleased to handle your personal ad in an efficient and discreet manner. The cost to set up a personal file under a unique file number is \$25. Ads requesting correspondence with this file are run at \$8 P.I. per insertion. All correspondence is immediately forwarded unopened.</p> <p>NEWLYWEDS & NEW PARENTS We offer a \$25 one-year subscription to couples whose wedding is announced in <i>Christian Courier</i> and to parents who announce a child's birth in our paper. If you want to take advantage of this offer, please let us know when placing your ad.</p> <p>SUBMITTING YOUR AD Mail: <i>Christian Courier</i> 1 Hiscott St St. Catharines ON L2R 1C7 fax: 905-682-8313 e-mail: see above</p> <p>OTHER INFORMATION <i>Christian Courier</i> reserves the right to print classifieds using our usual format and editing style and is not responsible for any errors due to hand-written or phoned-in advertisements.</p>	<p>April 5, 1957, Hamilton - April 5, 2007, Cochrane, Ont Wedding Text: Psalm 128:5a <i>May the Lord bless you from Zion all the days of your life.</i></p> <p>With joy and thanksgiving to God, we look forward to celebrating the 50th Wedding Anniversary of</p> <p>GEORGE AND ADA STRUYK (nee Dykshoorn).</p> <p>We join with you in thanking God for the years of blessings received, and we pray that he will continue to guide you in the years ahead.</p> <p>With love from your children:</p> <p>Carolyn Struyk, Cochrane Ann and Peter Wesley, Moose Factory Kate (Peggy) Struyk, Kitchener Adrian & Margaret Struyk, Cochrane Lene & Gary Mohle, Moorefield Richard and Leanna Struyk, Drayton Aileen Struyk, Cambridge Brenda Struyk, Kingston Rick Struyk, Timmins Jackie Struyk, Ottawa Jeff Struyk, Timmins</p> <p>Congratulations also, from your 19 grandchildren and 3 great-grandchildren.</p> <p>To celebrate this event, we invite you to an Open House on April 17, 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the Cochrane Christian Reformed Church, 115-16th Ave, Cochrane, Ontario Best wishes only, please.</p> <p>Home address: Box 1201, Cochrane ON P0L 1C0</p>	<p>Happy 40th Anniversary! ADRIAAN AND IRENE SCHOUTEN</p>  <p>April 15, 1967 We give God the glory for his blessings and his faithfulness through all these years! Congratulations and love from your family: Johannes & Phyllis - Seth, Grace, Baby Rachel Dirk & Mary Ann - Matthea, Elyse Jasper & Alissa - Noah, Leah, Calvin Correspondence: 273 Central Ave, Grimsby ON L3M 1X6</p>	
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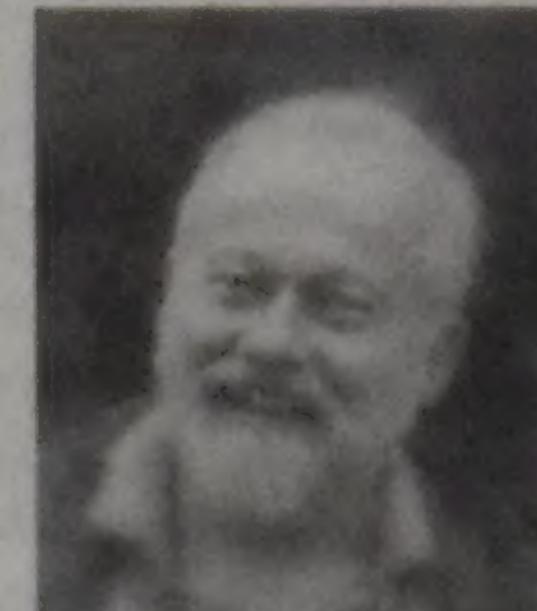
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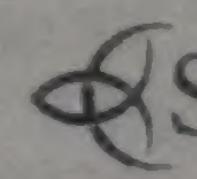
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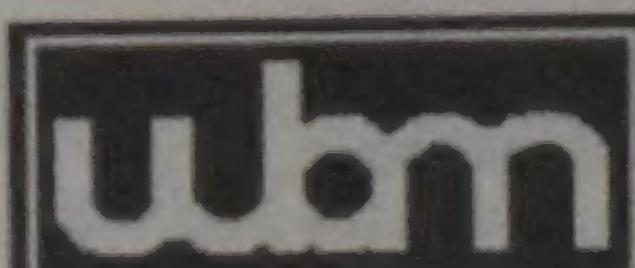
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Events/Advertising**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

Mar 30 Woodstock Dutch Theatre Groep - "Ik Voel Nattingheid" Christian Heritage School, Jordan Station, Ont. See ad Feb 5 issue for details or call 519-283-6285.

Apr 7 The Liberation Choir Fundraising Dinner will take place at 5.30 – 7 pm in Studio Theatre/Convention Centre at Hamilton Place with Micheal Coren as guest speaker. Included in this ticket price of \$ 200 is: prime seating at the concert and a Dinner Reservation. A \$ 100 tax receipt will be issued by Worldwide Christian Schools. Tickets available at Pianohouse Burlington, Worldwide Christian Schools, or Tjitske @ 905 520 0207

Apr 7 The Liberation Choir Burlington/Brampton Chapters perform in the EASTER CONCERT with Guelph Symphony Orchestra (Simon Irving, conductor) and a Combined Children's Choir (Elizabeth Webster, conductor) and Jennifer McMahon, soprano soloist. Director: Willem Van Suijdam@ 7.30 pm, GREAT HALL, HAMILTON PLACE, HAMILTON ON. Ticket prices: \$40 \$33 \$25. Tickets available at: Hamilton Place Box office, Ticket master, Choir members, River Run Centre in Guelph, Selected Dutch Stores and at the Pianohouse Burlington, 5205 Harvester Road, Burlington. www.liberationchoir.com

Apr 14 Festival of Praise with the Ontario Christian Male Choruses. 7:30 p.m. Covenant CRC, St. Catharines. See ad this issue for details

Apr 27, 28 Cambridge Christian School 40th anniversary. Call Nick at 519-620-8650 or website www.cambridgechristianschool.com See ad this issue for more details.

May 19, 20 Georgetown CRC 50th anniversary celebrations. Details to follow in April 30th issue or email: info@gcrc.on.ca. Website: www.gcrc.on.ca

May 5 Retirement celebration for Clarence bos, Principal of Clinton and District Christian School is retiring from his career in education at the end of the 2006/07 school year. Social begins at 7:30 pm and a tribute begins at 8:00 pm. Participate in the tribute by calling Ann Reinink at 519.523.4806 or email cdcs@tcc.on.ca See www.clintonchristian.ca/retirement for information.

May 26 Laurentian Hills Christian School 40th anniversary, 11 Laurentian Dr, Kitchener, ON. Dinner, program, \$15/person. To reserve by May 1st., call Mrs Grift 519-576-6700 or Mrs. Olthoff 519-742-5152. Check the web site for more details at www.lhcs.ws

June 9, 10 The First Christian Reformed Church of Kemptville 50 year celebration. Banquet on June 9 and worship service on June 10. Contact Harmen Boersma (613-258-5565).



Celebrating God's Blessings
for the
40th Anniversary

of
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with

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Dinner/Program at 7:00 pm
\$15.00/Person

Seating is limited. Call Mrs. M-J Grift at the school office at 519-576-6700 or Mrs. D. Olthoff at 519-742-5352

to May 1st to reserve a spot.

Check the web site for more details at www.lhcs.ws



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News

Global boom in coal power – and emissions

Mark Clayton

Forget the documentary "An Inconvenient Truth." Disregard rising public concern over global warming. Ignore the Kyoto Protocol.

The world certainly is – at least when it comes to building new electric-power plants. In the past five years, it has been on a coal-fired binge, bringing new generators online at a rate of better than two per week. That has added some one billion tons of new carbon-dioxide emissions that humans pump into the atmosphere each year. Coal-fired power now accounts for nearly a third of human-generated global CO₂ emissions.

So what does the future hold? An acceleration of the buildup, according to a Monitor analysis of power-industry data. Despite Kyoto limits on greenhouse gases, the analysis shows that nations will add enough coal-fired capacity in the next five years to create an extra 1.2 billion tons of CO₂ per year.

Those accelerating the buildup are not the usual suspects.

Take China, which is widely blamed for the rapid rise in greenhouse-gas emissions. Indeed, China accounted for two-thirds of the more than 560 coal-fired power units built in 26 nations between 2002 and 2006. The Chinese plants boosted annual world CO₂ emissions by 740 million tons. But in the next five years, China is slated to slow its buildup by half, according to industry estimates, adding 333 million tons of new CO₂ emissions every year. That's still the largest increase of any nation. But other nations appear intent on catching up.

"Really, it's been the story of what China is doing," says Steve Piper, managing director of power forecasting at Platts, the energy information division of McGraw-Hill that provided country-by-country power-plant data to the Monitor. "But it's also a story of unabated global growth in coal-fired power. We're seeing diversification away from pricier natural gas and crude oil. Coal looks cheap and attractive – and countries with coal resources see an opportunity that wasn't there before."

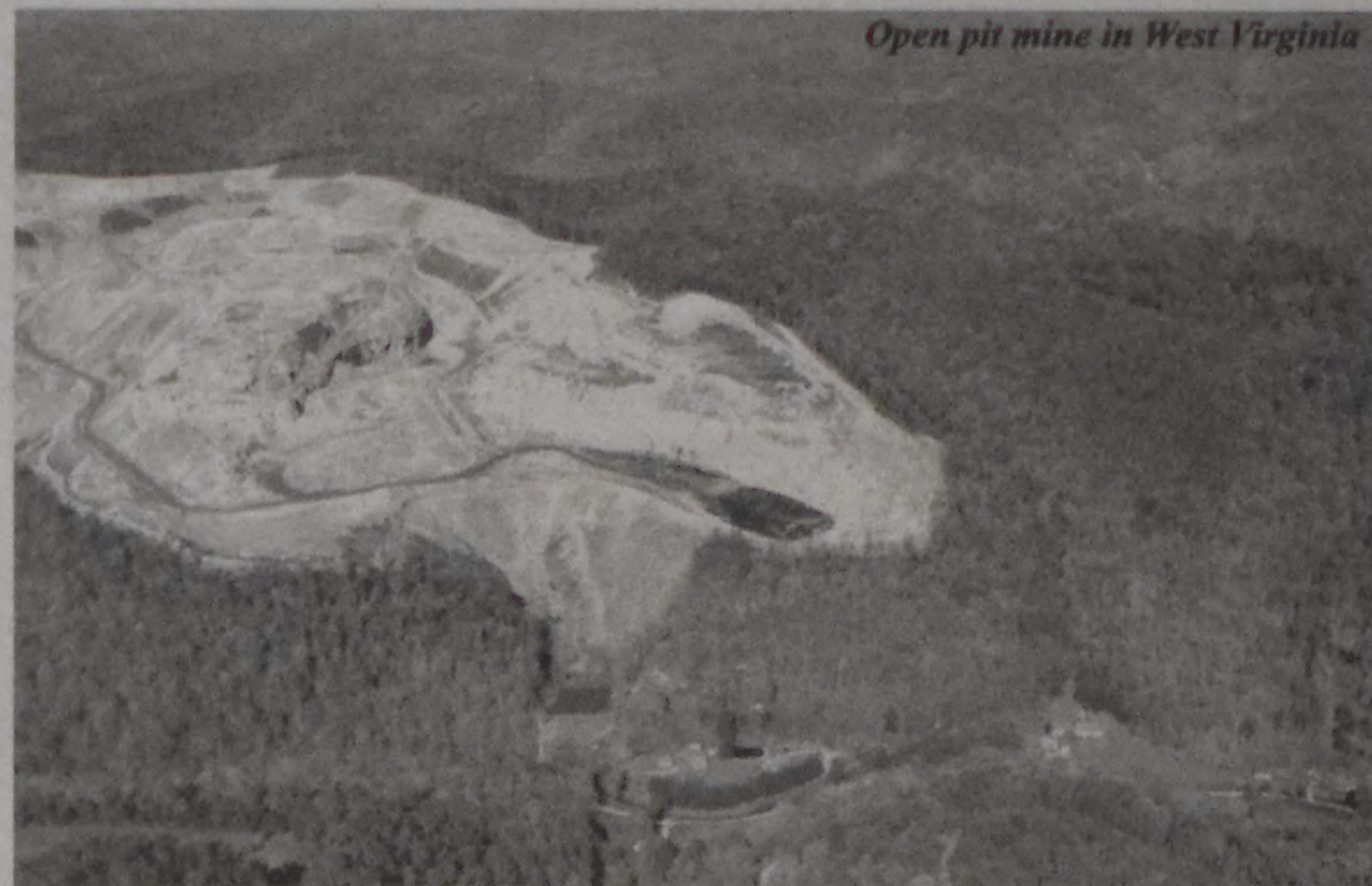
For example, the United States is accelerating its buildup dramatically. In the past five years it built 2.7 gigawatts of new coal-fired generating capacity. But in the next five years, it is slated to add 37.7 gigawatts of capacity, enough to produce 247.8 million tons of CO₂ per year, according to Platts. That would vault the US to second place – just ahead of India – in adding new capacity.

Even nations that have pledged to reduce global warming under the Kyoto treat are slated to accelerate their buildup of coal-fired plants. For example, eight EU nations – Germany, Italy, Poland, Spain, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic – plan to add nearly 13 gigawatts of new coal-fired capacity by 2012. That's up from about 2.5 gigawatts over the past five years.

New countries join coal-fired binge

In all, at least 37 nations plan to add coal-fired capacity in the next five years – up from the 26 nations that added capacity during the past five years. With Sri Lanka, Laos, and even oil-producing nations like Iran getting set to join the coal-power pack, the world faces the prospect five years from now of having 7,474 coal-fired power plants in 79 countries pumping out 9 billion tons of CO₂ emissions annually – out of 31 billion tons from all sources in 2012.

"These numbers show how far in the wrong direction the world is poised to go and indicate a lot of private sector investors still don't get it in terms of global warming," says David Hawkins, climate center director of the Natural Resources Defense Council in Washington. "This rapid



Open pit mine in West Virginia

"The Chinese won't be able to go forward by themselves," says Dr. Andrews-Speed. "They are going to need, EU, Japan, and US together to help them and set a good example."

Right now, the US is planning to build more than 150 coal-fired power plants that don't sequester their emissions, according to the US Department of Energy. Platts' short list of those most likely to be built in five years lists 64 power plants – which would still vault the US into a virtual tie with India at 38,000 megawatts of new output.

building of global-warming machines – which is what coal-power plants are – should be a wakeup call to politicians that we're driving ever faster toward the edge of the cliff."

But the cliff can be avoided, some researchers say, without having to reduce the world's energy consumption.

If carbon dioxide gas could be captured at power plants and then pumped underground and permanently "sequestered" in layers of rock, then coal might continue to be used without damaging the climate, concluded a major report by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology released last week.

In that light, whether or not China decides to build power plants that sequester carbon dioxide underground will be a central question. Right now, based on those power plants that Platts has been able to verify, overall construction growth could be tapering off. But none of them is expected to sequester emissions – and estimates of how many plants China expects to build vary widely.

So far there are 100 power plants with firm construction plans compared to 361 built in the previous five years, according to Platts. But other analysts, pointing to official government reports, say the total may be far higher.

Chinese government reports, for instance, tout coal-power plant building far in excess of what Platts' and others have been able to verify – about 170 gigawatts of new coal-power over the past three years, according to China expert Philip Andrews-Speed, director of the Centre for Energy, Petroleum and Mineral Law and Policy at the University of Dundee in Scotland.

"If the Chinese are right then it's a much worse problem than we might think," says Christopher Bergesen, a Platts expert who oversees power-plant data collection. He acknowledges Platts data may be a conservative base line for China. But until China reveals plant-specific data, not just aggregate numbers, he and other researchers can't be sure how fast China is building power plants that spur global warming.

Influencing plant construction

That leaves climate scientists and policy experts wondering how to influence power-plant construction in China and India. A huge factor is whether the EU and the US are able to persuade the Chinese to build plants that capture and sequester CO₂. Much depends on the US because China is unlikely to sequester its carbon dioxide if the US does not, analysts say.

Miners emerging from underground



"The good news is the politicians have their hands on the steering wheel," Dr. Hawkins says. "If they would just turn the wheel toward sequestration, then we don't have to go over this cliff."

Impact on climate models

To date, many climate models have not fully accounted for the worldwide acceleration of coal-plant building, scientists say.

"The phenomenon ... would lead to greater CO₂ emissions than most 'business as usual' forecasts project," says Robert Socolow, co-director of the Carbon Mitigation Initiative at Princeton University in an e-mail. "Fortunately the world has now begun to take CO₂ seriously, and coal-power emissions will be target No. 1 worldwide over the next decade. The fact that the US is waking up at last will give us the opportunity to have a positive effect on CO₂ policy in the rest of the world," he adds.

Mark Clayton is a staff writer of The Christian Science Monitor